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Modern Tragedy in the Absence of God:
An Analysis of Unamuno and Buero Vallejo

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Modern Tragedy in the Absence of God:
An Analysis of Unamuno and Buero Vallejo

by

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Dedication

To my loving family. To John, who gave me endless hours at the computer and continual love and support; to Ellie, who went from a little girl to a young lady; and to Andy, who went from a newborn to a strong little boy while this dissertation was created.

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Modern Tragedy in the Absence of God:
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This dissertation argues that tragedy, which appears to be dying, faces new possibilities of perseverance as a genre that stem from the doubts brought forward in Existentialism about God's existence and the meaning of human life. Miguel de Unamuno and Antonio Buero Vallejo lend themselves particularly well to an analysis of modern tragedy. Unamuno portrays the tragic condition of man after the loss of faith in God in *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*. Buero, one of the most important Spanish dramatists in the twentieth century, applies Unamuno's philosophy to his theory of the tragedy of hope, which describes a tragic cycle between hope and doubt. In his tragedies, Buero represents tragic hope in the human struggle between necessity and free will, burdened by the difficulty of belief in what seems rationally impossible. Through an analysis of classic tragedy and Aristotle's *Poetics*, I conclude that the creation of tragedy consistent with Aristotelian requirements of this genre is indeed possible today. My analysis of *Del sentimiento* considers Unamuno's description of a modern tragic view that is neither too optimistic, as Steiner claimed the modern age is, nor too pessimistic.

My analysis then shows the extent to which three Unamunian tragedies, *La Esfinge*, *La venda* and *Fedra* portray the themes of *Del sentimiento* while adhering to classic requirements for this genre. I then consider Buero's theory of the tragedy of hope, which is remarkably consistent with the *Poetics* and heavily influenced by the Unamunian tragic sense of life. Through an analysis of two Buerian tragedies, *En la ardiente oscuridad* and *La tejedora de sueños*, I conclude that Buero more successfully portrays the tragic view described in *Del sentimiento* by expanding the principle arguments of Unamuno's essay to cover a far broader range of potential objects of tragic hope as well as by showing greater skill as a dramatist. In spite of Buero's superiority as a dramatist, however, this dissertation concludes that modern tragedy is heavily indebted to Unamuno for introducing into modern Spanish thinking a tragic view of the world that reflects the difficulty of faith in the age of reason.

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Chapter 1: Tragedy in the Ancient and Modern World

The nature of tragedy has long been a highly debated subject in the fields of philosophy and literary criticism. This work, which will analyze tragedies of modern Spain, must therefore take the study of tragedy as a whole into consideration. I will focus on Miguel de Unamuno and Antonio Buero Vallejo, two authors whom I consider some of the finest tragedians of the twentieth century. Before I can call these authors "tragedians" or their works "tragedies," however, it is necessary to lay down the framework of tragedy, as this dissertation will deal with it. Since I wish to show that these authors not only produce fine tragedies, but that they also contribute to the debate on tragedy and its possibility of perseverance as a genre in the twentieth century, we must look at the arguments surrounding the genre as we attempt to find a suitable definition of it. There are some, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, who claim that the only true tragedies were Greek tragedies, particularly those of Aeschylus. There are others, such as George Steiner, who are willing to include the likes of Shakespeare and Racine in the exclusive list of true tragedians, but claim that tragedy is dead in the modern world. This chapter, therefore, will attempt to examine Occidental tragedy at its origin, with the Greeks. With a better understanding of what tragedy was to the Greeks, we can more adequately determine whether or not to accept or refute the arguments of more modern scholars such as Nietzsche and Steiner. We can also establish a direct connection between modern-day authors, such as Unamuno and Buero Vallejo, and the creators of this elusive genre.

We ought to remember that the first famous tragedian whose works we have examples of today, Aeschylus, appeared in the fifth century B.C., one generation before Socrates. The first tragedies, then, appeared just one century after the famous ancient rivalry between poetry and philosophy first appeared in the writings of such pre-Socratics as Xenophanes and Heraclitus. Tragedies were represented in Athens as an integral part of the Athenian religious festival. Three tragic poets would present four plays—three tragedies followed by a satyr play—in competition. Often, as we know, these three tragedies were thematically connected and together formed a trilogy. The only complete trilogy we have today is Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. The best-known ancient Greek tragedians, due to the loss of the large majority of ancient tragedies to history, are Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. In these competitions between tragic poets, we know that Aeschylus won first place thirteen times, Sophocles, twenty-four and Euripides, five.[1] The first philosopher to really examine the subject of poetry with some seriousness was Plato, who was alive during the time of, however a generation younger than, Sophocles and Euripides. Plato was very much concerned with distinguishing philosophy from poetry in his writings, and this bears on his scorn for the lack of truthfulness in poetry and his view that poetry is much less capable than philosophy of teaching us how to live good lives. It is Aristotle who first dedicates an entire book to the subject of poetry, the *Poetics*. In this book, Aristotle assigns more value to poetry and more skill to the poet than does Plato; he names tragedy the highest form of poetry, and he attempts to define

[1] This information is taken from Roger Dunkle. "Introduction to Greek Tragedy." *The Classical Origins of Western Culture*. New York: Brooklyn College, 1986 <http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/tragedy.htm>.

this genre in a very technical manner, as if he were writing a manual on how to write a tragedy for poets to consult.

For better or for worse, the *Poetics* is still regarded as an authoritative text on the subject of tragedy. Perhaps because Aristotle was the first to treat the subject as a whole, or because Aristotle had first-hand knowledge of the first tragedies ever written and performed, or because Aristotle is regarded as an expert on so many other subjects, it is widely assumed he must have been right about tragedy. Whether this be true or not, Aristotle is still very influential to critics and dramatists on the subject of tragedy, and for this reason, what he has to say about tragedy should be examined carefully. This chapter will therefore focus largely on the *Poetics* and many examples of commentary on this work that span the centuries. In doing so we will examine some of the most important terms and concepts in the *Poetics* that bear on the creation of "good" tragedy—the tragic, *mythos* or plot, the nobility of characters, reversal, recognition, *hamartia* or error, mimesis and catharsis—and hopefully determine whether such creation is possible today.

The Tragic

It is all too common today to hear of events referred to as tragic. What is understood by the term as it is used in modern times and how it relates to tragedy is not always entirely clear. It can be assumed, however, that not all things given the label "tragic" are necessarily material for fine tragedies. It is also quite probable that the use of this term is not uniform. What one person may deem tragic, another may simply label sad or pathetic. What distinguishes the term "tragic" from other terms such as "sad" or "pathetic" is that "tragic" stems entirely from a literary genre. "Tragic" is a term derived

from "tragedy," and "tragedy" from the Greek *tragos*, relating to goats and goat songs. There is nothing to be found in the term itself, then, that can better elucidate the nature of that which can truly be called tragic. It is necessary, then, to analyze how the term is actually used, both today and by the ancient Greeks.

It must first be assumed that not all suffering is tragic. Walter Kaufmann, in his analysis of tragedy, discusses the distinction between the tragic and the merely pathetic. Kaufmann points out that many scholars often assume that "inevitable" must be attached to the term "tragic." A disaster that could have been avoided, then, would not be tragic, but simply pathetic. For example, George Steiner argues that tragedy tells us that "necessity is blind and man's encounter with it shall rob him of his eyes, whether it be in Thebes or in Gaza" (5). Kaufmann, and I agree with him, takes great objection to this claim. There are many examples in Greek tragedy where the disaster can be avoided. Indeed, Aristotle's insistence upon there being some sort of a *hamartia* or error on the heroes' behalf implies that many times the tragedy will be highly avoidable. Jonathan Lear's argument that catharsis is occasioned by coming to understand the chain of causes and effects that lead to the tragedy also assumes avoidable disasters. As Kaufmann states:

> The Greek tragic poets went out of their way again and again to convince us that catastrophe was *not* inevitable. This is plain in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, *Oresteia*, and *Promethesus*; it is almost equally plain in *The Persians*, where it is clearly suggested that Xerxes should not—and certainly need not—have invaded Greece; and in the *Seven* we are told

> expressly that Laius was warned not to have children but disregarded the warning. (365)

The assumption that all tragedy must be inevitable, then, appears to be a modern conception that is not related to the Greeks' understanding of tragedy. It is possible that this concept of the tragic stems from the view that *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the paradigm tragedy to much modern thought, portrays an inevitable tragedy. "In *Oedipus Tyrannus* we do have a genuinely tragic situation in which catastrophe is inevitable whatever the hero decides to do; but it is exceedingly unreasonable to suggest that only dramas and events that closely resemble *this* tragedy are truly tragic" (Kaufmann 366). More so, while the example of Oedipus does indeed seem inevitable if you assume that the oracle was right and his fate was determined from the beginning, we can still see through an analysis of the events leading up to Oedipus' tragedy certain points where Oedipus might have indeed avoided his fate. He did not, for example, have to kill the stranger he met on his path. Buero Vallejo claims that the hero's choices and errors are always the ultimate cause of the misfortunate event in tragedy and that "[l]os oráculos y predicciones no hacen otra cosa que indicar sus consecuencias" (70). Stephen White's example of Oedipus' possible twin brother Oddipus, who chose to stay home while his brother left Corinth to seek the truth, also illustrates how it is possible to imagine Oedipus' tragedy being avoided (224-25).

Setting aside the issue of inevitability, it is still tempting to draw a distinction between the tragic and the merely pathetic. Modern versions of tragic suffering often lack the nobility of that of a character like Oedipus. "Indeed, it is almost a commonplace that Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* are not tragic

because the heroes are "pathetic" or, as is sometimes said, anti-heroes" (Kaufmann 364). Kaufmann, however, draws on the ancient Greek poets and Shakespeare to prove that such a distinction between the tragic and the merely pathetic is a modern one and does not appear in works that are widely accepted as tragedies. The distinction, according to Kaufmann, is based on a false assumption "that both Greek and Shakespearean tragedy concentrated on the tragic and disdained the merely pathetic, and that the loss of this crucial distinction is a modern phenomenon. In fact, we have found that neither the Greeks nor Shakespeare did make this distinction" (364). One clear example that Kaufmann offers is the case of Philoctetes, whose suffering comes from a snakebite. Kaufmann also directs our attention to *The Women of Trachis, Oedipus at Colonus*, *The Trojan Women* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*, all of which provide examples of suffering that would be merely pathetic by modern standards. Kauffman rebukes critics who insist on this distinction:

> [S]uch critics could say that many of the tragedies of "the most tragic of the poets" [sc. Euripides] were not really tragedies at all because they were not truly tragic. By the same token, many of Aeschylus' and Sophocles' tragedies would suffer the same fate—at the hands of critics who think they know better what is tragic or a tragedy than did Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristotle. (365)

The importance of understanding what the ancients took to be tragic is thus illustrated.

In chapter 13 of the *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses three types of plots that are unsuitable for tragedy, and a fourth that is. The fault of the first three plots is that they do not elicit pity or terror and are therefore untragic.

> Since the construction of the finest tragedy should not be simple but complex, and moreover it should represent terrifying and pitiable events (for this is particular to representation of this sort), first, clearly, it should not show (i) decent men undergoing a change from good fortune to misfortune; for this is neither terrifying nor pitiable, but shocking. Nor [should it show] (ii) wicked men [passing] from misfortune to good fortune. This is most untragic of all, for it has nothing of what it should; for it is neither morally satisfying nor pitiable nor terrifying. Nor, again, [should it show] (iii) a thoroughly villainous person falling from good fortune to misfortune: such a structure can contain moral satisfaction, but not pity or terror, for the former is felt for a person undeserving of his misfortune, and the latter for a person like [ourselves]. (*Poetics* XIII, 1452b32-1453a5)

We get the sense from this passage that Aristotle understands "tragic" to be that which arouses the most terror, or fear, and pity. The role of moral satisfaction in what Aristotle considers to be the finest tragedies will be discussed in the next section, however we see that all three of these plots are considered to be untragic, even though the third does provide moral satisfaction, and therefore that the arousal of fear and pity seems to be most central to Aristotle's concept of the tragic. To illustrate the point even further, let's consider Aristotle's fourth plot, which is indeed tragic. The fourth plot "involves a change not from misfortune to good fortune, but conversely, from good fortune to misfortune, not because of wickedness but because of a great error … by a better person rather than a worse one" (XIII, 1453a13-17). Aristotle then argues that Euripides,

although criticized for having many of his tragedies end in misfortune, is the most tragic for doing so. "[A]lthough Euripides manages badly in other respects, he is obviously the most tragic of poets" (XIII, 1453a29-30). Euripides' plays are the most tragic precisely because they provoke the most fear and pity. "It is, according to Aristotle, part of the distinctive function of tragedy to arouse certain emotions. The tragedy that arouses these emotions most strongly is the most tragic, even if it should be inferior in other respects" (Kaufmann, 363).

The strong relation between tragedy and that which we call tragic is evident. Still, it seems that whether portrayed in an actual tragedy or not, any misfortune that arouses fear and pity could justifiably be deemed tragic. While this definition of the tragic is somewhat subjective, given that two people could hear of the same event and respond differently, it only needs to be assumed that a tragic event, either fictional or real, will produce fear and pity in *most* people when they hear of it. There indeed seems to be some general consensus among people about what is more or less tragic. A mother of five young children killed before her time, for example, is generally considered to be more tragic than the death of an old man who has already completed his life's works and feels satisfied with his life as a whole. It can be assumed that the first scenario provokes more fear and pity than the second. Therefore, the most acceptable understanding of the term "tragic" will be that which produces fear and pity, and the measure of more or less tragic will be based on how much fear and pity are aroused by the event in question. The connection between the term "tragic" and the literary genre that it stems from also implies that people have dramatic tragedies in mind when they call something tragic. "When we speak of events as tragedies, we use the word figuratively; but sometimes this

is not merely legitimate but illuminating: it sharpens our perception and permits us to see what, without the benefit of literary insight, we might overlook" (Kaufmann 371). Often an event read about in the news could easily be imagined on the stage as a tragedy, which gives an event a more grandiose and severe feel, much like a young woman views her relationship as more significant imagining it as the subject of a romantic novel. So, understanding the tragic as that which produces fear and pity makes it clear that it is certainly possible for tragic events to occur in our times, and it is therefore hard to imagine why writing about these events in a tragedy should be impossible.

Before discussing the possibility of tragedy in our times, however, there is another point about ancient tragedy that needs to be made. While Aristotle calls a tragedy that ends in misfortune the most tragic, not all tragedies have unhappy endings. Indeed, it is arguable that Aristotle's very favorite tragedy was *Iphigenia at Tauris*, which has a happy ending.

> Aristotle mentions changes both for the better and for the worse; and all four patterns in *Poetics* 13 refer only to moving "into" a good or bad state, not of remaining there and ending in the same state. The "most tragic" plays, then, end unhappily, but they are only a subset of "the finest tragedies." (White 231)

The idea of a play with a happy ending being labeled a tragedy is counter to the modern conception of tragedy. George Steiner asserts plainly that "tragedies end badly" (8). But this was not the case with the Greek poets or with Aristotle. It is certainly possible for a drama to produce great fear and pity during a crisis, and still to have this crisis resolved before the play's end. "Provided a story involves some serious misfortune, whether

actual and ultimate or only prospective, it can end either happily or sadly" (White 231). Tragedies with happy endings appear to have been preferable to the ancient Greek audience, as is shown by the rejection of Euripides by his contemporary Athenians for having so many plays that ended in misfortune. While we may not encounter as many examples of tragedies today that have happy endings, it is important to remember that such endings do not preclude the possibility of a play being a tragedy. It serves as a reminder that very different plays were all considered tragedies in ancient Greece, and will hopefully make us less eager to denounce all plays that do not closely resemble such paradigm tragedies as *Oedipus Tyrannus* as untragic.

The Arousal of Fear and Pity

As the last section has shown, the best method for determining whether or not something is tragic, and just how tragic it is, will be based on a measure of how well and how much it arouses fear and pity. It seems that Aristotle had this criterion in mind when discussing the proper use of the various elements of tragedy. For example, the right plot and characters seem to serve the function of most adequately arousing these tragic emotions. As we saw in Aristotle's discussion of better and worse plots in *Poetics* 13, Aristotle also considers moral satisfaction to play a part in tragedy. The role of moral satisfaction in Aristotle's view of tragedy can best be understood through an analysis of the nobility of the characters and what Stephen White refers to as moral fortune in his analysis of Aristotle's favorite tragedies. As we will see, the moral satisfaction a

spectator feels towards a character's behavior is also, according to Aristotle, a direct function of how much fear and pity is aroused in the spectator.

Keeping in mind that Plato objected to tragedy in part because he felt that tragedy portrays characters having exaggerated emotional responses to the events of their lives, it is logical to assume that this would have been a concern of Aristotle as well. It is for this reason that the best tragedies, for Aristotle, portray "moral fortune" or the way people respond to their luck. White points out that luck can play a part in the morality of our actions (221). For example, I may lose control of my car in icy conditions and, through no deliberate fault of my own, kill the driver of a car I crash into. This is what White refers to as moral luck. Moral luck plays an important role in tragedy because it jeopardizes happiness and is something over which we have no control. In addition, "[m]oral luck not only adds to the vulnerability of happiness; it also threatens moral virtue itself" (White 224). Where my morality comes into play is not in the fact that I killed another driver, but in how I respond to this unfortunate situation. I could respond more or less admirably. I could show no concern for the family of the driver I struck and brush the incident off as not having been my fault. This would be a less admirable response. A more admirable response would be if I took responsibility for the event, showed remorse to the family of the driver, and did such things as start a trust fund for his children, or take his family into my own home while they looked for a new residence.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argues that happiness is stable because virtuous actions are stable, and we derive the most happiness from behaving virtuously. In other words, we can't control our moral luck, but we can control how we respond, and a virtuous response should make us happier than a less admirable response. In tragedy,

however, we do not always see the happiness of the characters remain unaffected when adversity strikes. White tells us:

> We may doubt that [virtuous] activities depend on luck as little as [Aristotle] claims, or that they are as satisfying for the virtuous as his argument requires; but the basis for stability here is also the primary object of admiration, and even if the virtuous lose happiness, their action remains admirable. (227)

White concludes that Aristotle favors tragedies where the heroes respond nobly to bad situations for which they aren't strictly responsible. Admirable responses to bad moral luck make what White calls good moral fortune (225). How differently we would regard *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for example, had Oedipus just pouted and complained that it wasn't his fault he killed his father and married his mother, and therefore that he should not have to go into exile. While these events are not strictly Oedipus' fault, his response to them is crucial to the tragedy itself.

White reminds us that, according to Aristotle, all tragedy descends from praise-poetry, "hymns and encomia" that "represented fine actions and the actions of fine people" (*Poetics* IV, 1448b24-27). Tragedy is different from comedy and closer to epic poetry because it portrays "noble people." These characters should not be perfect, but they should be "better than us." "[Aristotle] sets an upper limit on virtue, as well as a lower one, and the *Poetics* disapproves of showing what the *Ethics* finds best. The "finest" plays are not about paragons of virtue responding nobly to adversity, because it interferes with the tragic effect if the characters are too bad or too good" (White 228). It is important to feel that the characters are like us in order to feel fear and pity for them.

"It is 'fine' when a paragon of virtue handles misfortune well, but also when people more like us manage to do the same, and noble actions in adversity are admirable no matter who performs them" (228). Fear and pity, which have "the decisive role in the distinctively tragic pleasure" (229), are better aroused by characters that respond admirably to adversity. We ought to remember Aristotle's claim that in order to feel pity for the characters, we must feel their suffering is undeserved. White clarifies this point; we do not have to feel that the characters are entirely innocent, but we must feel they deserve better. The more nobly the characters behave, the better we will feel they deserve. Likewise, in order to feel fear for the character, we must feel they are like us; we will feel no fear for a character that we feel to be very different from us. For this reason, the characters must not be too good or too bad. "For a story to arouse our fear and pity, then, it must make us morally "involved"; unless we care about what happens to its characters and how they fare, *their* actions and fortunes can hardly affect *our* feelings, or cause *us* to suffer fear or pity *for them*" (229).

As we saw in the last section, Aristotle's demands for the right type of plot in tragedy also hinge upon how well it arouses fear and pity. As we have just seen, the plot must also portray admirable characters and actions to arouse these emotions .[2] The other elements of plot that are important to Aristotle—*peripeteiai* or reversals, *anagnoriseis* or recognitions, and *hamartia* or error—are also important for their aid in the arousal of fear

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2 It is important to remember to distinguish between the *source* of suffering and the *response* to such suffering. The characters and their actions are defined as admirable according to their response to adversity. In the last section, when we compared the tragic and the merely pathetic, we saw that the source of suffering does not have to be admirable or noble, such as the examples of Philoctetes' snake bite. It is the response to the suffering, no matter how trivial its cause, that must be admirable.

and pity. Aristotle states that "the most important things with which a tragedy enthralls [us] are parts of plot—reversals and recognitions" (VI, 1450a33-34). The importance of reversals is already clear; we must witness a character moving from one sort of fortune to another, namely, from good fortune to misfortune. In Aristotle's four types of plots, the first one depicts a good man moving from good to bad fortune, and Aristotle labels this type of plot shocking and not suitable for tragedy. The fourth plot, which Aristotle prefers for tragedy, depicts a similar reversal, however with the addition of some sort of *hamartia* committed by the character. The error, and the recognition of this error, is crucial for the characters to feel the moral cost of their actions. The error does not necessarily have to be egregious for it to cause regret in the character. In the example of my accidentally killing another driver in icy conditions, my error would be having chosen to drive at all in such conditions. While I certainly did not intend the negative result of this choice, I would still regret it all the same. This regret would ensure my taking moral responsibility, and thus responding nobly to the misfortune I found myself in. "This error … may or may not exonerate or excuse [the characters]; but even if it does, it is a source of regret when they find out what it has led them to do (or almost to do). They may not change their mind or wish they had acted differently, but it at least makes them wish their options had been different" (White 230). It is for this reason, then, that Aristotle claims that error, and the recognition of this error, are necessary if a plot is to arouse fear and pity in the spectator.

Catharsis

Given the vital role of the tragic emotions in determining what can rightly be called a tragedy, we must now consider the concept of catharsis. It is, after all, in the arousal of fear and pity, followed by the catharsis of these emotions, that the spectator supposedly experiences the pleasure of tragedy. Catharsis, however, is perhaps the most elusive term used by Aristotle in his analysis of tragedy. Unfortunately, Aristotle does not give much time to the explanation of his terms in the *Poetics*, and this makes his text quite hard to understand. I do not pretend to be a scholar of ancient Greek or ancient philosophy. There is, however, much written on the *Poetics* by good and clear-thinking scholars. It is therefore possible, and indeed necessary, to reach some conclusions about the meaning of catharsis through an analysis of existing scholarship on the *Poetics*. Since Aristotle's definition of tragedy hinges upon the concept of catharsis (VI, 1449b22-28), we must analyze what Aristotle was referring to when he used this term. The concept of tragic catharsis answers many questions: it explains the paradox of tragedy, how it is possible that many derive pleasure from witnessing a tragedy, and it refutes Plato's claim that the poet is unskilled and that watching tragedies is bad for us. In coming to understand catharsis, we can also begin to address the question of whether or not tragedy is possible today. A brief study of the history of critical interpretations of tragic catharsis will not only give us a better understanding of what Aristotle meant by catharsis, it will also give us the opportunity to consider other elements of tragedy that Aristotle discusses in the *Poetics*, which have direct bearing on the cathartic process. Also, there are many common misconceptions about catharsis still prevalent today that appeared with the first writers to comment on Aristotle's *Poetics*. An analysis of such misconceptions will

therefore aid in avoiding the same pitfalls that other scholars had when tackling the term 'catharsis.'

Ever since Plato, the study of tragedy has dealt, in part, with the effects on the spectator of watching tragedy. Aristotle's famous suggestion that tragedy produces a catharsis of emotions such as fear and pity has received a variety of interpretations, and the scarcity of textual evidence makes it nearly impossible to adjudicate between them. One general notion that they share, however, is that catharsis bears on the relation between our emotions and our reason. All such arguments could be seen as a counter to Plato's claim that watching tragedy is bad for us. For this reason, we should begin with an overview of Plato's account of the negative effects of tragedy. His account, which ultimately results in his banning tragedy from his ideal state, can be summarized in five main points.[3] First, Plato claims in the *Timaeus* that tragedy lies about the world. Plato holds that the world is not a tragic place, but rather, that it is governed by a rational and good intellect. Second, in the *Republic* II and III, Plato argues that poetry in general should be heavily censored for children because poets are often wrong about morality and the world. As a result, they tell lies about morality and about the nature of the gods, which are good according to Plato. Third, in both the *Ion* and in the *Republic* X, Plato attempts to prove that poets do not need any knowledge of their subject matter in order to achieve a brilliant mimesis of it. From this comes Plato's famous suggestion that poets are either divinely inspired (a suggestion that Plato himself probably did not take too seriously) or simply mad. Fourth, in the *Republic* X, Plato explains why he bans tragedy

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3 I have John Heil to thank for directing me to passages of both Plato and Aristotle that have been pertinent to my discussion here.

from his ideal state altogether. He claims that tragedy damages the character of a healthy, educated adult by eliciting emotions that conflict with his or her reason. Finally, in support of this previous claim, in the *Republic* X, Plato argues that the emotional experience we have in the theater exercises and strengthens the emotional points of view that are in conflict with our reason. As a result, we have to struggle with these emotions more in our daily lives. For example, a healthy rational person, in his or her daily life, may suppress the urge to cry in situations that he or she does not deem appropriate for crying. In the theater, this person may find an opportunity to release that pent-up desire to cry. Plato, however, believes that this exercise will only increase the desire to cry in daily life, as opposed to the 'purging' of this desire suggested by Aristotle.

Aristotle attempts to legitimize poetry through his definition of this *techne* in the *Poetics*. Treating poetry as a *techne*, Aristotle methodically defines the requirements of poetry, and thereby demonstrates that the poet must be skilled in order to produce good poetry. Aristotle's insistence upon the quality of mimesis in good poetry, that the fiction must be rational and believable (*Poetics* XXIV), serves to illustrate the skill of a good poet, which counters Plato's suggestion that the poet is in a state of irrational inspiration when writing poetry. Aristotle suggests that the end of poetry is the natural pleasure of mimesis (*Poetics* IV), which allows the telling of fictional 'lies', because, as long as it is done skillfully, this will serve the end of poetry (*Poetics* XXIV). These arguments in the *Poetics*, thus far, merely raise the status of poetry; they do not yet respond to Plato's more serious claim that watching tragedy damages the character of a healthy, educated adult. Aristotle seems to respond to this charge with the following definition of tragedy:

> Tragedy is a representation of a serious, complete action which has magnitude, in embellished speech, with each of its elements [used] separately in the various parts [of the play]; [represented] by people acting and not by narration; accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions. (*Poetics* VI, 1449b22-28)[4]

While Aristotle's meaning when he refers to the 'catharsis' of pity and fear in tragedy is not entirely clear, from this passage we can derive that: Aristotle is thinking of a positive effect on the relation between the emotions and reason, occasioned by tragedy, which counters Plato's contention that tragedy occasions harmful effects on this relation. The meaning of catharsis has been so widely studied due to its importance in Aristotle's justification of tragedy. As Jonathan Lear claims, "in coming to understand what katharsis is, we will be approaching an understanding of the special contribution poetry makes to life" (321).

Since Aristotle's response to Plato in the *Poetics* has received widely varied interpretations, it is necessary to illustrate the possible interpretations, distinguishing between what we know with some certainty and what we can merely speculate about. The first Western scholars to comment on Aristotle's text in Renaissance Italy, such as Francesco Robertello and Ludovico Castelvetro, while misinterpreting some basic aspects of Aristotle's view in the *Poetics*, have suggested various facets of the possible interpretations of the cathartic experience which are still debated among eminent scholars today. It is possible to demonstrate the problems that arise when attempting to explain Aristotle's catharsis through a comparison of the interpretations of these Renaissance

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4 Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the *Poetics* use the Richard Janko translation.

scholars with modern interpretations, with particular attention to those discussed by Jonathan Lear. I do not attempt to offer a correct interpretation of catharsis, however, I do aim to demonstrate a general area in which the appropriate interpretation of catharsis must lie through an analysis of the arguments that have already been proposed on this much-debated subject.

"[W]hat [Aristotle] meant in claiming that tragedy produces a katharsis, is a question that has dominated Western philosophy and literary criticism since the Renaissance" (Lear 315). During the Renaissance, particularly in Italy, scholars began to take an interest in the writings of Aristotle, first introduced into the Western world in Spain by the Muslim scholar, Averroës. In 1548, Francesco Robertello published the first full-scale exposition of the *Poetics* in his *In librum Aristotelis De arte poetica explicationes* in Florence. Robertello had only four forms of the treatise to work with, none of which contained an attempt to explain the meaning of the text: the Averroës paraphrase translated into Latin, first published in 1481; the Giorgio Valla translation into Latin of 1498; the *editio princeps* of the Greek text of 1508; and the Latin translation of Alessandro de' Pazzi of 1536 (Weinberg 319). Shortly after Robertello's commentary, many other major commentaries began to appear, all of which follow Robertello inasmuch as they either accept or refute his claims.[5] Among these interpretations of the *Poetics* from Renaissance Italy, Castelvetro's is the most widely read and studied today. After the appearance of the later commentators, Robertello's influence waned, and it is hard to find much of anything about him today (Weinberg 319-20). Still, considering

Robertello's role as the first in the Western world to comment on Aristotle's text, an effort loaded with difficulties of its own, and also considering his influence on Castelvetro, it is worthwhile to analyze Robertello's commentary. As we will see, his interpretation of catharsis and Aristotle's response to Plato, while containing its share of errors, outlines some of the fundamental aspects of Aristotle's claim that are still widely accepted today.

Bernard Weinberg points out that Robertello's conception of the objectives of poetry is triple. He views a Horatian *dolce et utile* potential in poetry, as well as an Aristotelian outcome of imitation. Robertello also seems to combine the objectives of mimesis and pleasure:

> [I]t frequently happens that things which arouse horror and terror in men as long as they are in their own nature, once they are taken out of nature and represented in some form resembling nature, give great pleasure…. What other end, therefore, can we say that the poetic faculty has than to delight through the representation, description, and imitation of every human action, every emotion, every thing animate as well as inanimate? (321)[6]

As Weinberg points out, this passage demonstrates that the pleasure of poetry comes through imitation, which therefore makes mimesis an intermediary end of poetry. However, Robertello does not indicate whether the utility of poetry or the pleasure of

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5 Of these commentaries, the most extensive are those of Maggi and Lombardi in 1550, Vettori in 1560, Castelvetro in 1570, Alessandro Piccolomini in 1575, and Riccoboni in 1578 and 1587 (Weinberg 319).

6 The translation from the Latin is Weinberg's.

poetry is, according to his interpretation, the primary purpose of poetry. While this question is not directly answered, Weinberg notes that Robertello dedicates more time to the question of utility (324). It is also interesting to note how Robertello's claim that those things that arouse terror in life can produce great pleasure in imitation is somewhat Nietzschean in tone. While Nietzsche considers his own view of tragedy to be quite different from Aristotle's, Nietzsche sees tragedy as providing an aesthetic triumph over the dark and tragic elements of life. Seeing the tragedy of life sung beautifully, according to Nietzsche, we are afforded at least a temporary reconciliation with it (Kaufmann 314). This is not so far from Robertello's interpretation of the pleasure of mimesis, which is capable of transforming terrible and horrific things into beautiful ones.

Much like he does with the pleasure of poetry, Robertello sees a multiple utility in tragedy, but it is important to note from the beginning that Robertello is considering a moral utility in all cases. "If, on the one hand, the reading (or performance) and imitation consist in virtue and the praise of some excellent man, people are incited to virtue; if, on the other hand, vices are represented, people are strongly deterred from those vices…" (321). Robertello explains how this moral utility is achieved through his explanation of what Aristotle meant by catharsis. His commentary indicates that three things happen during the cathartic experience. First, when the spectators witness a tragic drama, "they become accustomed to suffering, to fearing, to pitying," which causes them in their daily lives "to suffer less and to fear less." Second, in remarkable similarity with Lear's interpretation, Robertello also considers "the fact that men frequently are sorry and afraid inappropriately." By watching tragedies that "present persons and actions most worthy of pity … men learn what those things are which properly excite pity and sorrow." The

final result of catharsis, which, according to Robertello, "is really the greatest one," is that "since the fate of all mortal men is the same and since there is nobody who is not subject to disasters, men learn to bear more easily the befalling of misfortune, and surely they are most vigorously sustained by this consolation, that they remember the same thing to have happened to others" (322).[7]

Perhaps the most remarkable element of Robertello's analysis is his second effect of catharsis, which involves learning about the appropriate emotions to have in certain situations. This account of catharsis is very similar to, albeit less sophisticated than, the modern cognitivist view of catharsis as a clarification process, which will be discussed at length in the analysis of Jonathan Lear's interpretation of catharsis. Indeed, Robertello's first "growing accustomed to pity and fear" model is also a component in the cognitivist view, however, neither Robertello nor Castelvetro indicate an educative quality of habituation when portraying this model. Also, in Robertello's discussion on the importance of credibility he states precisely where Aristotle disagrees with Plato. Robertello, treating catharsis as the "special device for turning credible action into moral utility" (327), explains that Aristotle disagreed with Plato in that "such passions do not at all corrupt the characters of men or become more abundant in their souls, but rather purge them of all kinds of perturbations" (330).

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7 This final interpretation of catharsis seems to be echoed in a more modern view of the role of tragedy first initiated by Nietzsche's description of the Dionysian ritual. Walter Kaufmann, a Nietzsche scholar and writer on tragedy, sees the recognition of our universal plight in this world as central to the role of tragedy. Unamuno also wishes for tragedy to allow us to "llorar en común nuestro destino." This view on the role of tragedy will be discussed at greater length when we come to Nietzsche in the next chapter.

Robertello discusses the importance of the credibility of the mimesis in the same manner that he discusses the pleasure of poetry and the utility of poetry, distinguishing between many different kinds of credibility (e.g. credibility of plot, credibility of action, credibility of character, etc.). This constant distinction results in Weinberg's criticism of Robertello for treating poetry as a compiling of multiple means and effects where "the artistic unity and integrity of the work disappear as part of the problem" (347). This criticism, however, applies more directly to Robertello's multiplicity of utility and of pleasure than it does to his multiplicity of credibility. Robertello, at the very least, makes a more general claim about the credibility of the mimesis clear: that believable poetry will better serve the end of moral utility. He claims that the degree to which an action in poetry resembles the real world action that it represents determines the degree of it's moral utility. "In all cases, utility will result only from a belief of the audience in the truthfulness of the poem, and that, in turn, will depend upon the degree to which the poem is made probable and verisimilar" (338). Castelvetro, while disagreeing with Robertello about the role of moral utility in tragedy, agrees with him that a better mimesis (i.e. both tragic and credible) will produce stronger emotions in the spectator.

In his discussion of the pleasures of tragedy, in a manner already indicated, Robertello divides these pleasures into three. The first pleasure is that of imitation. The second is the *difficulté vaincue*, which results from seeing an impossible task, namely, pleasing through a well-done representation of the unpleasant and sad. Finally, there is a pleasure in the marvelous, which Robertello also defines as the feeling of wonder, of amazement, from the unexpected and the extraordinary (340-41). The last pleasure raises the contradiction that the marvelous is less credible, and Robertello, like Aristotle, admits

more of the marvelous into epic poetry than into tragedy. In the end, however, Robertello seems to "make it possible for the poet to discard all concern for credibility in order to exploit all the available means of achieving the marvelous and the pleasure connected with it" (342). It is important to note that Robertello tries to find separate causes for the pleasure and the utility derived by the audience, which means that "pleasure will contribute to the ultimate utilitarian goal of the work… only by making the poem as a whole enjoyable to the audience" (343). It seems then, that since catharsis is the means by which the end of moral utility is achieved, catharsis in itself would not occasion pleasure in the spectator according to Robertello, as he wants to keep these ends separate. Since Robertello sees learning as part of the process of tragic catharsis, he creates an inconsistency by disassociating pleasure from catharsis; he is disregarding Aristotle's claim that learning affords the highest form of pleasure (*Poetics* VI).

Certain criticisms against Robertello's interpretation of the *Poetics* have already been mentioned. In addition to these, there are many other misinterpretations noted by Weinberg, such as the division intended by Aristotle when he refers to the six parts of tragedy (329). Robertello also outlines curious stipulations of poetry that do not seem to exist anywhere in Aristotle, such as his separation of the notion of pity and fear, adding the element of the marvelous. Robertello then states that neither fear nor the marvelous can occur alone, but that in combination with pity these three effects produce four possible types of plots, two of which are simple (those that do not contain the marvelous) and two which are complex (those that contain the marvelous) (328). These types of errors are, however, of a sort that does not seem to destroy Robertello's merit as a commentator on a text for which he had scarce examples and no exegesis.

Still, there is a more serious sort of general error that Robertello makes, which is connected to his focus on the audience and the actors. Weinberg argues quite convincingly that, due to contemporary influences on Robertello, he creates a system that is rhetorical, where the end of tragedy seems to be to persuade the audience. Robertello always seems to have a specific, vulgar audience in mind when he discusses tragedy, which he wants to persuade to behave morally. Therein lies the most striking religious element of Robertello's commentary. His wide use of the word *persuadentum* in his discussion of the effects of tragedy would be just as applicable in a discussion of the effects of rhetoric (344). Weinberg defines Robertello's departure from Aristotle as such:

> The fundamental alteration comes in the passage from a poetic position to a rhetorical position, from a position in which the essential consideration is the achievement of the internal and structural relationships which will make the poem beautiful to one in which the main problem is the discovery of those devices which will produce a desired effect upon a specified audience…. [T]he effect produced is no longer one of artistic pleasure resulting from the formal qualities of the work, but one of moral persuasion to action or inaction, in which the pleasure involved is merely an accompaniment or an instrument; and the audience is composed of men capable of yielding to this kind of persuasion rather than of men capable of enjoying this pleasure. (346-47)

Weinberg ultimately concludes that the fundamental conceptions of Aristotle's *Poetics* escape Robertello, that he reassembles the "component fragments" that have contact with Aristotle's argument into a new system of his own. Finally, Weinberg warns that "this

will be the procedure for all of Robertello's successors and will account for the progressive transformation and deformation of the idea of poetry contained in the *Poetics*" (348).

The problems highlighted in Robertello's commentary of the *Poetics* illustrate, among other things, the difficulty of interpreting Aristotle's text without the aid of previous commentary on the *Poetics* and familiarity with all of Aristotle's works. Certainly, with regards to the problem of catharsis, Aristotle's text is not self-explanatory. Robertello's commentary also points out various elements of Aristotelian tragedy whose role in catharsis must be considered in order to understand the cathartic process, e.g. the roles of mimesis, verisimilitude, emotion, pleasure and utility, even if he fails to adequately explain these roles. Ludovico Castelvetro also misinterprets the *Poetics*, perhaps more so than Robertello, according to Weinberg (349), but his commentary further demonstrates the complexities of the problem of catharsis.

Robertello's insistence upon the moral utility of tragedy stands as an argument to Plato's claim that tragedy damages the character of the spectator. This moral utility is occasioned by catharsis. Castelvetro accepts Robertello's view that catharsis has a moral utility that serves as an answer to Plato's banishment of tragedy from his ideal state. Like Robertello, he attempts to explain why Plato argues against tragedy in the *Republic*. "Plato, then, when he forbids tragedy as inducing fear and pity, forbids it because the example of respected persons who exhibit weakness of soul in adversity, is harmful to people" (*Critical Theory* 138). However, Castelvetro refuses to accept that the utility of catharsis is an end of poetry, insisting that it is only "incidental to the real end of pleasure" (Weinberg 355).

Castelvetro describes catharsis as a physical/psychological process, which resembles Robertello's account of catharsis as a process by which we are habituated to emotions such as pity and fear. In order to explain how this process works, Castelvetro describes how wine becomes more and more diluted as water is mixed with it, or, how a father will love more intensely each of his children, if he has two or three, than he would if he has "a hundred or a thousand or more" (*Critical Theory* 137). Catharsis, by this account, seems to be akin to a gradual waning of the emotions, in so much as the more one feels fear or pity, the less likely they are to feel fear and pity as intensely in the future, on occasions when such emotions would be appropriate. Castelvetro's analogy seems to include a possible educative component even less than Robertello's habituation model in his account for catharsis, however, learning also has a part in Castelvetro's system. Castelvetro explains the ways in which catharsis can be a source of pleasure. One way in which Castelvetro envisions catharsis as producing pleasure is somewhat self-righteous; by feeling displeasure at the misfortune of others, the spectator recognizes his or her own virtue and is thereby pleased with him or herself. The second way in which catharsis produces pleasure in the spectator is through learning. Castelvetro explains that when we witness a tragedy, "we learn in a quiet and hidden way how subject we are to many misfortunes…and this pleases us more than if another, as a teacher and openly in words, should teach us the same thing" (Weinberg 355).[8] Again, this view resembles the modern cognitivist view of catharsis as a clarification process. By his own account, then, catharsis could be an objective of tragedy inasmuch as it is a source of pleasure in the spectator.

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8 This translation from the Italian is Weinberg's.

As Robertello does, Castelvetro insists upon a mix of the credible and the marvelous in tragedy. He claims that the mimesis must be credible and verisimilar in order for the spectator to identify with the character. Through identification with the character, the spectator will experience the emotions that the tragedy ought to provoke. In this manner, Castelvetro reaffirms the insistence upon good mimesis in order to achieve the most effective cathartic experience. This is a view that is still argued today. Paul Woodruff, in his study on mimesis, concludes that mimesis in tragedy is defined by its ability to affect us emotionally. For Woodruff, mimesis in tragedy is inseparable from the fact that the spectators' emotions are engaged: "It has little to do with the problem of truth in poetry, and a great deal to do with explaining the effects poetry has on its audience" (73). The fact that the issue of mimesis is still debated shows how Robertello, and Castelvetro after him, while making mistakes, initiated discussion in the Western world of the various elements of tragedy related to the problem of catharsis.

One area in which Castelvetro has had the most lasting impression on philosophy and literary criticism is a counter to Plato's claim that poets write poetry, not by methodical skill, but rather by an irrational inspiration. Castelvetro insists that the poet is not mad, but rather gifted. The poet, like God, creates something from nothing. For this, Castelvetro insists that the poet invent, in order to avoid either a plagiarism or a history, and thus establishes a criterion for the originality of the creation (Weinberg 363). Castelvetro also attempts to legitimize the poet by insisting that the poet "does not need to be divinely inspired, to write under the influence of the *furor poeticus*, to feel himself the passions which he incorporates in his characters; these are superstitions fostered by

the poets to improve their credit with the ignorant masses. Instead, he is a deliberate and careful artisan" (Weinberg 370).

It should also be mentioned that Castelvetro's most lasting influence has been in establishing the "pseudo-Aristotelian" unities of time, place, and action (Weinberg 349). Castelvetro also confuses the distinction between poetry and history; in his system, poetry becomes a branch of history, but with the purpose of pleasing and delighting its audience (370). These contributions of Castelvetro, unfortunately, are the least Aristotelian. However, unlike Robertello, Castelvetro does not accept all the claims of Aristotle. Weinberg describes Castelvetro as treating the text of the *Poetics* with a basic scorn, openly characterizing certain ideas of Aristotle's (as he understands them) as false (349-50). For this reason, Castelvetro's commentary is often clouded by his own theory of poetics. Castelvetro's commentary also pushes the importance of the audience to the extreme, leaving practically everything to be determined by the audience (351). His concern for the audience reveals his own utilitarianism, for he insists that poetry should serve to keep the common people happy (*Critical Theory* 134).[9] One final problem with Castelvetro's commentary has already been indicated: his self-righteous attitude, which Charleton even refers to as evangelical (129). In further explanation of how we are able to purge emotions such as pity and fear, Castelvetro also offers this: "[W]hen we witness

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9 It is interesting to note that this interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* is the one that leads Bertold Brecht to reject Aristotelian tragedy and the concept of catharsis. Brecht was not interested in a work that would silence the audience by reducing its members to happy complacency. Such an interpretation of the role of catharsis, however, does not seem to be what Aristotle had in mind. In fact, Aristotle seemed much more concerned with *improving* the character of the audience members by enhancing their ability to make good choices. Still, Brecht's interpretation of catharsis, first held by Ludovico Castelvetro, has

the occurrence of many misfortunes which do not involve us, little by little we feel more secure and convince ourselves that God, who has watched over us so many times in the past, will also protect us in the future" (*Critical Theory* 138). Needless to say, this element of catharsis is, in all likelihood, not what Aristotle had in mind.

In order to clarify and to establish with more certainty what Aristotle may have indeed had in mind when he discussed catharsis in tragedy, let us now turn to Jonathan Lear. In his article on catharsis, Lear's method is to outline and then refute previous statements about the nature of catharsis, thereby setting up a number of constraints as to what catharsis must not mean. Then, within these constraints, Lear offers his own interpretation of catharsis. Lear's article is useful, not only because it is, for the most part, convincing, but also because it illustrates, through his refutation of the leading theories of catharsis, a composite sketch of the possibilities of interpretations of catharsis today. These interpretations are led by scholars who, unlike Robertello and Castelvetro, have the benefit of centuries of study on the subject, as well as a wider knowledge of Aristotle's works as a whole. For example, Lear calls attention to the fact that Aristotle uses the term 'catharsis' most often as a term for menstrual discharge (315). This use of the term 'catharsis', taken into consideration, will ultimately influence Lear's account of tragic catharsis.

"In the last hundred years it has been widely accepted that by katharsis Aristotle meant a purgation of the emotions" (315). Lear attributes this wide acceptance to the influence of Jacob Bernays, who insists that, in Aristotle's definition of tragedy, catharsis describes a purgation. Lear accepts that Aristotle may be using the concept of purgation,

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had wide influence on twentieth-century playwrights and on assumptions about the

but that if so, it must be a metaphor, and this does not shed light on what is actually happening when the spectator undergoes catharsis (315). Lear challenges Bernays' concept of catharsis as a purgation claiming that, in order to accept it, we have to assume that Aristotle viewed catharsis as a cure for an emotionally pathological condition (316). Lear mentions that there is indeed support for this claim in the *Politics* VIII 5-7. In this passage, Aristotle, in addition to making the alluring comment that catharsis will be treated with further precision in the subject of poetry, speaks of cathartic music. As an example he speaks of persons in a religious frenzy, "whom we see as a result of the sacred melodies—when they have used the melodies that excite the soul to mystic frenzy—restored as though they had found healing and catharsis" (316).[10] Lear rejects this passage as a proof that Aristotle is envisioning a cure for a pathological condition. He points out that, even if we accept that a religious frenzy is a pathological condition, Aristotle makes it clear in this passage that cathartic music would likewise affect anyone influenced by pity and fear, or any other such emotions. Even more compelling, Lear points out that, since catharsis holds true for everyone, this includes virtuous people, and, by Aristotle's definition of virtue, we cannot conceive of a virtuous person in need of a cure for a pathological condition (317). Finally, through an analysis of Aristotle's emotions, Lear concludes that emotions like pity and fear are not capable of being purged. He states that "the emotion of fear is not exhausted by the feeling one has when one feels fear" (317). He also reminds us that according to Aristotle, in order to have fear, one must have the belief that they are in danger, and that this danger merits fear.

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meaning of the *Poetics*.

Ultimately, he concludes that "if an emotion requires not merely a feeling, but also a belief about the world one is in and an attitude towards it, then it is hard to know what could be meant by purging an emotion." Therefore, emotions are "too complex and world directed" for the purgation model to work (317).

Briefly, Lear also rejects the idea that catharsis is some sort of purification process. The main argument, again, is that virtuous people will also experience catharsis in the theater, and following Aristotle's definition, it is incorrect to conceive of the virtuous person as containing any impurities. Lear also states that Eduard Muller has linked the purification model to the transformation of pity and fear into pleasure. "The fact that we do have certain pleasure from the pitiable and fearful events that are portrayed in tragedy is, I think, of the greatest importance in coming to understand tragic katharsis" (318). However, he insists that the pleasure we have is in addition to the pity and fear we experience in the theater.

At this point Lear addresses the cognitivist view of catharsis as a clarification process, which he regards as "[p]erhaps the most sophisticated view of katharsis" (318). This view is maintained by scholars such as Stephen Halliwell and Martha Nussbaum. Lear recognizes that there is support for this argument. First, virtue, for Aristotle, partially consists in having the right emotional responses. Also, the process by which youths are trained in ethical education is a process of habituation, where the youths learn to take pleasure in noble acts and displeasure in ignoble acts. Therefore, by habituating ourselves to the feelings of pity and fear, the cognitivist argues, tragedy trains us ethically

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10 Lear uses the Oxford translation here, but notes that he has modified it in various parts.

(318). One should remember Robertello and Castelvetro, and note how well their arguments would fit into the cognitivist view: both conceived of catharsis as a habituation process that involved learning. Lear acknowledges two merits to this argument. One is that this account of catharsis relies on a "sophisticated, and genuinely Aristotelian, conception of the emotions" (318). Also, this view accounts for the peculiar pleasure of tragedy, which, by this view, is the pleasure of understanding (319).

In spite of the merits of this view, Lear still rejects it. He gives several reasons for rejecting this view, which I will summarize below. First, a virtuous person, in need of no education, will experience tragic catharsis as well. Also, in the passage cited from the *Politics*, Aristotle distinguishes between cathartic and educative melodies, which implies that in tragedy, the distinction would remain. Lear also insists that a tragic plot, according to Aristotle, would be most appreciated by a cultivated person. "It is hard to escape the conclusion that, for Aristotle, education is for youths, tragic catharsis is for educated, cultivated adults" (320). Lear also points out that there is a certain sense in which tragedy is not evoking the proper responses because, in a real life tragedy, it would be entirely inappropriate to feel pleasure. It is only because the mimesis is a mimesis that it is appropriate to feel any pleasure in the tragedy. It is on the point of mimesis that Lear believes Aristotle responds to Plato. Aristotle disagrees with Plato that a mimesis could be confused with the real event, and therefore, that tragedy could have negative effects on ethical education. The value of tragedy in ethical education is therefore neutral, and "[i]f poetry has positive value, it must lie outside the realm of ethical education" (321). Finally, if catharsis, as Lear claims, does not describe the process of coming to understand, the cognitivist view fails to explain the pleasure peculiar to tragedy.

Lear distinguishes between the pleasure of mimesis and cognitive pleasure in order to continue his refutation of the education model of catharsis. He argues that too much is made of Aristotle's comparison of mimesis and the pleasure of understanding in *Poetics* IV. He claims that it is a mistake to assume that the reasoning involved in mimesis is a reasoning about causes, but rather, that it is a more elementary sort of reasoning, a recognition that this (the representation) is that (the real-life model) (322-23). Lear recognizes that understanding is important in tragedy insofar as the spectator must cognitively appreciate the plot and feel pleasure in this, but he insists that these are 'causal antecedents' of the feeling of pity and fear, and therefore, of catharsis (323). Finally, Lear refutes the idea that the pleasure of the marvelous is linked to an educative catharsis. The marvelous, according to Aristotle, is occasioned by the occurrence of unexpected events in an intelligible relation to each other. Unlike the wonder that first prompted man to philosophize, thus leading to the pleasure of understanding as described in the *Metaphysics*, Lear argues that in the *Poetics*, understanding precedes the wonder. One must understand the rational connection in the chain of events in order to feel wonder. Also, Aristotle links irrationality to wonder in the *Poetics*, as we have already seen, and he states that the experience of wonder in itself is pleasurable. For all these reasons, Lear concludes that cognitive pleasure is merely a step *en route* to the proper pleasure of tragedy (324).

Concerning the relation between history, philosophy, and poetry, Lear also wants to refute a possible argument for the cognitivists. Aristotle's claim in *Poetics* IX that poetry is more like philosophy than history because it deals with universals is, according to Lear, treated as too grandiose a claim by the cognitivists. The fact that poetry deals

with universals merely refers to the fact that poetry deals with "this sort of thing" which could happen to "this type of person." It does not mean that poetry deals with universals that express the essence of the human condition, this would put poetry on the par with, if not beyond, philosophy itself. Rather, poetry is simply one step closer to philosophy than history, which is forced to deal only with particulars (325). Lear reminds the reader that when Aristotle deals with the universals of poetry, it is to illustrate how the spectator will come to identify with the characters, for "this type of person" will often represent just the type of person sitting in the audience, or reading the tragedy. "[I]n order for an audience to feel pity and fear they must believe there is a certain similarity between themselves and the character in the tragedy" (326). Lear closes his refutation of the cognitivist view of catharsis on the subject of universality, concluding that, "[t]he universality Aristotle has in mind when he talks about the universality of poetry is not as such aiming at the depth of the human condition, it is aiming at the universality of the human condition" (326).

Once Lear has refuted the conceptions of catharsis summarized above, he recapitulates the constraints imposed by his refutations. Within these constraints, Lear proposes his own view of what occurs when we experience tragic catharsis. Lear insists again that in order to have the emotions of pity and fear, a belief regarding the pitiful or fearful object must accompany the feeling of pity and fear. Lear argues that tragedy does not convince us to believe that our condition is pitiful and fearful, thus occasioning the corresponding emotions. This would imply that the spectators walk into the theater, or open the book, without the belief. During the tragedy, however, they would have to acquire the belief in order to feel pity and fear, and then, at the end of the tragedy, the

belief that occasioned the pity and fear would then again disappear, if these emotions are to then be purged. In order to explain what happens, Lear refers again to the image of the virtuous man who, "believes that terrible, tragic events could happen to him, true, but the possibility of those things happening is, in his opinion, too remote for the actual feeling of fear to be warranted" (333). This belief in the remote possibility, however, produces a weight on the soul. Yet tragedy brings the remote possibility home, thereby allowing the spectator to experience the emotions associated with this belief, which would not be appropriate in daily life. Lear emphasizes the "appropriate environment" of the theater. "We imaginatively live life to the full, but we risk nothing. The relief is thus not that of 'releasing pent-up emotions' *per se*, it is the relief of 'releasing' these emotions in a safe environment" (334).

In order to complete his account, Lear adds to this conception of catharsis an element of consolation. Lear reminds us that Aristotle describes an unsuitable plot for tragedy, where a good man falls into bad fortune, as simply shocking in *Poetics* XIII (329). Lear wishes to add to this description of a good man falling into bad fortune, the phrase "for no reason at all" (334). Aristotle's insistence upon there being a reason for the tragic hero's downfall, the famous "tragic flaw," shows that for Aristotle, tragedy must portray tragic events occurring within the constraints of a rational, ordered world. For this reason, Aristotle views *Oedipus Tyrannus* as the paradigm tragedy, as opposed to *Antigone*, where tragedy befalls her through no fault of her own (335). The consolation is that, through tragedy, we confront our greatest fears in a safe environment, which we appropriately do not confront on a daily basis, and we see that, even when tragedy occurs, it does not occur in a meaningless and chaotic world (335).

Lear's account of catharsis is convincing on many levels, as is his refutation of the pre-existing models of catharsis. However, it seems that Lear's conclusion closely resembles the catharsis-as-purgation model, especially if we do not insist upon assuming that this model implies a pathological condition in need of a cure. Doesn't the idea of a belief in the remote possibility of tragedy befalling us, of which even the most virtuous are capable, imply a need for purging in itself? Also, the recognition that the world is a rationally ordered place, even when tragedy strikes, is a process of coming to understand something, or at the very least it is a reaffirmation of a belief that requires, by its very nature, reaffirming. By the merits of the cognitivist view, which Lear himself points out, in addition to the integral role that understanding plays in Lear's own account of catharsis, it seems that this view cannot be brushed aside as easily as Lear would like. Also, it seems that Plato's use of the term 'catharsis', which appears in *Phaedo* and the *Sophist*, deserves more attention. Considering that Aristotle responds to Plato's claim that tragedy is harmful to educated adults precisely at the point of catharsis, in addition to the frustrating fact that Aristotle doesn't explain what he means by catharsis, it seems highly probable that Aristotle conceives of catharsis much in the same way that Plato does. Nevertheless, Lear's argument is powerful and it seems to bring us closer to understanding the meaning of catharsis through its extensive analysis of the leading interpretations of this elusive process.

Is tragedy possible today?

This analysis of catharsis suggests many interesting avenues of study on tragedy. For example, if catharsis does indeed reaffirm the rational order of the universe, how

does this affect the role of catharsis in existential tragedies where the "misfortunate event" is the fact that the world is chaotic and meaningless? Given that this existential theme arises in many of Unamuno and Buero Vallejo's plays, and indeed in many twentieth-century plays in general, it will be necessary to reconcile this account of Aristotle's catharsis with such modern tragedies. This topic will be dealt with throughout the rest of this dissertation. We will see, for example, that Buero Vallejo successfully creates Aristotelian tragic plots in which the larger existential theme of meaninglessness is only represented symbolically and is therefore subject to interpretation. For now, it is sufficient to remember that we are focusing on Aristotle's world-view more than on tragedy itself. Also, many existentialists may agree that the world indeed follows a rational chain of cause and effect; the existentialist's objection would be that this chain is inherently meaningless. Finally, it is Plato, not Aristotle, who objects to tragedy for telling lies about the gods. It is quite possible to imagine an existential interpretation of many Greek tragedies, tragedies that Aristotle approves of and esteems. Indeed, Aristotle's *Poetics* is silent on the subject of the proper content of tragedy; his focus is on form. Therefore, it would not be wise to focus too much attention on the types of messages Aristotle felt a tragedy should portray. It seems that, as long as a tragedy adheres to the formal requirements set forth in the *Poetics*, and that the message or meaning of the tragedy does not interfere with these requirements, Aristotle would consider it a valid example of tragedy.

Given the central role of the arousal of fear and pity in Aristotle's account of tragedy, which makes possible the catharsis of these emotions, it is hard to imagine why a tragedy that adheres to the most fundamental Aristotelian requirements should not be

possible today. Aristotle takes the arousal of fear and pity into consideration in his discussion of all elements of tragedy. The importance of a compelling plot, with reversals, error and recognition, about an admirable, albeit flawed, protagonist, is directly linked to the importance of a tragedy provoking fear and pity in the spectator. It is true that there are other formal conditions set forth in the *Poetics* that are not always met today, such as the play being written in verse, and the use of a chorus and music. We must remember, however, that Aristotle's emphasis is on the *mythos*, the story or the plot of the tragedy, which he calls the "soul" of tragedy, and ranks first in the order of importance. Second most important in a tragedy, according to Aristotle, are the characters, and third, reasoning of the characters, portrayed in the play through speeches and the like. Aristotle gives fourth place to diction, about which he says, "I mean, as we said earlier, communication by means of language, which has the same potential in the case of both verse and [prose] speeches" (VI, 1450b13-14). Given Aristotle's own description of diction, it is hard to imagine that a play's being in prose instead of verse would cause Aristotle to refuse it as a tragedy. We must also remember that tragedy in verse was the only example of tragedy in ancient Greece. The use of verse or prose seems very much related to what an audience expects and is used to. As for the remaining parts of tragedy, Aristotle says this: "[S]ong is the most important of the embellishments. Spectacle is something enthralling, but it is very artless and least particular to the art of poetic composition. The potential of tragedy exists even without a performance and actors" (6, 1450b15-19). The ranking of importance that Aristotle gives the various parts of tragedy, in addition to the fact that he thinks tragedy is possible even when it is not performed, make it clear that for Aristotle the tragedy lies in the story, first

and foremost, and how that story is told. Our analysis of the tragic tells us that the story must be told in a way that most effectively arouses fear and pity. Put in the simplest and most general terms possible, this is Aristotle's most basic requisite for tragedy.

George Steiner's claim that Christian tragedy is not possible because faith in God's final justice eliminates the tragic is very powerful, and I agree with him. A Christian drama, such as Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla*, portrays a non-virtuous man, Don Juan, falling into misfortune, *i.e.*, getting what he deserves—eternal damnation. As Aristotle claims, such a plot may offer the audience moral satisfaction, but it would not properly arouse fear and pity. Much like faith in a Christian God, Steiner also argues that faith in reason and progress precludes the possibility of tragedy. Just as Christian faith in drama reassures the audience that the virtuous will be rewarded, faith in reason and progress in drama reassures the audience that through perseverance, all obstacles can be overcome. Both the Christian and the progress-through-reason views are considered far too optimistic to permit the creation of tragedy, and both views are said to dominate modern thought. Modern plays that do not portray the existence of a just and loving god or infallible reason and progress, however, could be very tragic as long as they properly arouse fear and pity. My argument is that the plays of Unamuno and Buero Vallejo do just that. Unamuno describes a conflict between faith and doubt in *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*. Buero Vallejo's tragedy of hope that doubts follows Unamuno's tragic sense of life and provides a model that most adequately produces the emotions of fear and pity in the modern world because, while his plays do not embrace the optimism of absolute faith, they do not wallow in extreme pessimism either. We will see in the following chapters that Buero's theory of tragedy, as well as his tragic dramas,

are heavily indebted to Unamuno's philosophy. Unamuno also used the genre of tragic drama to express this philosophy. However Buero's dramas, following Aristotelian standards, are more successful examples of modern tragedy.

Kaufmann states that "[w]e have been told that tragedy is dead, that it died of optimism, faith in reason, confidence in progress. Tragedy is not dead, but what estranges us from it is just the opposite: despair" (xviii). Kaufmann claims that despair does not make tragedy impossible, but that it makes us unable to access it. Despair, however, occurs only when there is no hope. This dissertation argues that despair is the appropriate emotional response to the absurdist view, which is indeed untragic. Such plays do not arouse fear and pity because they present us with characters that are absurd; they are not like us and therefore we do not feel fear or pity for them. Also, the absurd view most generally claims that we ought to accept that life is meaningless, and with that comes the apathy of despair. However, the cycle of hope and doubt inherent in the philosophies of thinkers such as Unamuno and Kierkegaard, portrayed in the works of Buero Vallejo, is somewhere between this absolute faith and despair. It is here that tragedy is indeed possible in our times, as the following chapters will attempt to show.

Chapter 2: The Tragic Sense of Life: A Modern Tragic View

In his analysis of the dramas of Miguel de Unamuno and Antonio Buero Vallejo, Ricardo Doménech concludes the following about the state of modern tragedy:

> Hoy con mayor razón, cuando tantos castillos en el aire se han venido abajo, advertimos con claridad que la vision trágica—a menudo ligada al simbolismo y al existencialismo—es la forma de arte y de pensamiento que se mantiene en pie, con toda su vigencia, en este atardecer del siglo. (112)

Doménech's view that a "visión trágica" of the world has particular relevance today stands in direct opposition to George Steiner's claim—made forty years earlier—that modern times are inherently anti-tragic. In the previous chapter, Steiner's claims about the death of tragedy were analyzed in light of the un-Aristotelian characteristics of his view of tragedy. Here it will be useful to consider Steiner's definition of tragedy in order to better understand his claims concerning the anti-tragic nature of the modern age, which impedes the creation of a true modern tragedy. Then we will consider how Unamuno's *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* paints a view of human life and existence that is both modern and tragic.

With his characteristically colorful language, Steiner claims:

> Tragic drama tells us that the spheres of reason, order, and justice are terribly limited and that no progress in our science or technical resources will enlarge their relevance. Outside and within man is *l'autre*, the "otherness" of the world. Call it what you will: a hidden or malevolent

> God, blind fate, the solicitations of hell, or the brute fury of our animal blood. It waits for us in ambush at the crossroads. It mocks us and destroys us. (8-9)

This definition reveals Steiner's most general claim about what prevents the modern age from being conducive to tragic drama: it is too optimistic. "Where the causes of disaster are temporal, where the conflict can be resolved through technical or social means, we may have serious drama, but not tragedy" (8). Steiner claims that a society capable of producing genuine tragedies must adhere to an underlying mythology that is compatible with the world-view offered in tragedy and that in modern times we do not adhere to any such mythology. The predominant "mythologies" in our modern society are, according to Steiner, belief in a just, benevolent God and a faith in our ability to achieve social and personal progress through science, technology and reason.

Much like Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Christian drama that portrays the just and benevolent nature of God, far from describing man's destruction at the hands of the "otherness" of the world, represents "the soul ascending from shadow to starlight, from fearful doubt to the joy and certitude of grace" (11-12). Steiner calls Christian tragedy "a notion in itself paradoxical" because it is always "in part a *commedia"* (31). However, Steiner seems to suggest the other modern mythology he outlines is perhaps more damaging to tragedy, and it stems from the "Rousseauist belief in the perfectibility of man. … This redemptive mythology may have social and psychological merit, … [b]ut one thing is clear: such a view of the human condition is radically optimistic. It cannot engender any natural form of tragic drama" (127-8). In his discussion of the modern fondness for this idea of the "perfectibility of man," Steiner spends quite a bit of time

considering Marxism as a paradigm example of a modern mythology that is anti-tragic; instead of destruction, it envisions the utopian society. "Like the medieval visionary with his absolute faith in the advent of the Kingdom of God, the communist is certain that the kingdom of justice is nearing on earth" (342-43).

Miguel de Unamuno, called the most tragic author of modern Spain (Doménech 115), held a tragic view of life that springs from the opposition of the two modern mythologies outlined by Steiner: faith in reason and science vs. faith in a just, benevolent God. *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* outlines the various elements of Unamuno's philosophy that appear repeatedly throughout his work. The tragic sense of life stems from the irresolvable and eternal struggle between *la cabeza* and *el corazón*. Echoing Dante, Unamuno describes his well-known crisis of 1897, in which he came to this struggle.

> Mientras peregriné por los campos de la razón a busca de Dios, no pude encontrarle, porque la idea de Dios no me engañaba, ni pude tomar por Dios a una idea, y fue entonces, cuando erraba por los páramos del racionalismo, cuando me dije que no debemos buscar más consuelo que la verdad, llamando así a la razón, sin que por eso me consolara. Pero al ir hundiéndome en el escepticismo racional de una parte y en la desesperación sentimental de otra, se me encendió el hambre de Dios, y el ahogo de espíritu me hizo sentir, con su falta, su realidad. Y quise que haya Dios, que exista Dios. (212)

Unamuno, a Catholic, enjoyed simple faith in his youth. As an intellectual, however, he came to doubt his faith as a natural consequence of his pursuit of knowledge. He was

unable to satisfy himself simply by replacing his faith in God with faith in progress, which, while potentially offering great advances for human society, will never offer what is most important to human existence according to Unamuno: immortality. "Progresar, ¿para qué?" (328). Unamuno blames the modern obsession with progress, which he dates back to the Renaissance, for making faith impossible. "[A] descatolizar a Europa, han contribuido el Renacimiento, la Reforma y la Revolución, sustituyendo aquel ideal de una vida eterna ultraterrena por el ideal del progreso, de la razón, de la ciencia" (328). In spite of his strong desire to be a believer, Unamuno, as a rational creature, found it impossible. For this, Unamuno grew frustrated with reason. "[S]iempre resulta que la razón se pone enfrente de nuestro anhelo de inmortalidad personal, y nos lo contradice. Y es que en rigor la razón es enemiga de la vida" (140). Could it not be, then, that for Unamuno, Steiner's "otherness" of the world, to which reason, science and progress offer no remedy, is the looming consciousness of our own mortality against which we are bound to fight? For Unamuno, most certainly, this is the great tragedy of our times. "Es un trágico combate, es el fondo de la tragedia, el combate de la vida con la razón" (141).

Unamuno's tragic sense of life is an existential one; it represents the individual struggle against meaninglessness. If death is final and all shall turn to dust, we are left with the question, *¿para qué?* This dissertation argues that Unamuno's tragic sense of life opens the door to modern tragedy by outlining a modern struggle between hope and doubt, a struggle that Buero Vallejo portrays in his tragedies, albeit not always regarding the question of immortality *per se*. For this reason, this chapter, in addition to the development of Unamuno's theater, examines more carefully Unamuno's tragic sense of life, in particular his arguments in *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida,* because they are

repeated obsessively throughout his work, especially in his drama. To consider whether or not Unamuno's plays are indeed tragedies, we must understand how the ideas put forth in them relate back to his tragic sense of life. For this purpose, as well as to illustrate where Unamuno's philosophy fits in the spectrum of modern thinking on these existential issues, I wish to briefly outline and discuss the main arguments of this very important collection of essays.

El sentimiento trágico de la vida

As Unamuno describes in the previous quotation, as a young man he set out to find God through reason, that is, to explain rationally God's existence and the promise of immortality. However, reason led him to conclude the opposite, that death is most likely final. "Y así como antes de nacer no fuimos ni tenemos recuerdo alguno personal de entonces, así después de morir no seremos. Esto es lo racional" (131). But instead of considering human mortality a foregone conclusion and focusing his attention elsewhere, Unamuno considers life after death the only thing that will give this life meaning. "[H]ay que creer en esa otra vida para poder vivir ésta y soportarla y darle sentido y finalidad" (293). In a certain sense, given that Unamuno cannot believe in the afterlife, he instead makes his stubborn refusal to abandon the struggle the meaning of his existence. In response to the imagined question from his readers, "Who is this man?" Unamuno responds, "uno que dice una cosa con el corazón y la contraria con la cabeza y que hace de esta lucha su vida" (294). Since Unamuno desires to base his life on this paradox, he argues that both sides of the struggle are necessary for a complete life; "fe, vida y razón

se necesitan mutuamente" (161). He even makes the argument that the doubt and uncertainty created by his fidelity both to reason and the desire for immortality are the greatest consolation this life has to offer; "de este abrazo entre la desesperación y el escepticismo, nace la santa, la dulce, la salvadora incertidumbre, nuestro supremo consuelo" (167). One can only make sense of his describing uncertainty as "santa," "dulce" and "salvadora" when keeping in mind how intimately connected this struggle and the very meaning of his existence were for Unamuno.

Unamuno's embrace of both *la cabeza* and *el corazón* leads him oftentimes to make contradictory and perplexing statements. Unamuno recognizes this himself: "¿Contradicción? ¡Ya lo creo! ¡La de mi corazón que dice que sí, mi cabeza, que dice no!" (69). Armando Savignano rightly reminds us that Unamuno's contradictions, at least those made when discussing this struggle, are better understood as paradoxes deeply connected to Unamuno's life. Savignano argues that "se trata de un lenguaje 'paradójico' más bien que contradictorio," adding that "Unamuno no es contradictorio en sus escritos, sino en su experiencia biográfica" (662). Unamuno—like many others, I would imagine—waffled back and forth in his life, leaning more towards faith at times, and more towards complete skepticism at others. Also, Unamuno makes it clear that he speaks at times with his head, and at others with his heart. This would explain how Unamuno is able to make the following contradictory statement, at which Antonio Sánchez-Barbudo expresses his frustration in *Del sentimiento*'s introduction (39): "La fe crea, en cierto modo, su objeto. Y la fe en Dios consiste en crear a Dios" (234). Up to this point, Unamuno expresses an entirely consistent view about the subjective nature of God's existence, i.e., that God exists subjectively for those who believe in Him. But,

immediately afterwards, Unamuno adds "y como es Dios el que nos da la fe en Él…" (234), thus implying the *objective* existence of God. It should be assumed that in the first segment, Unamuno would assert that he was speaking with *la cabeza* and in the second, with *el corazón*. While Unamuno makes it clear that he did not, in his heart, actually believe in God's existence, he states time and again that it is necessary to live as if he held such a belief, thus explaining why he sometimes, quite abruptly, will switch into a language that implies he did indeed hold such a belief: "[H]ay, sobre todo, que sentir y conducirse como si nos estuviese reservada una continuación sin fin de nuestra vida terrenal después de la muerte" (293).

The relationship between Unamuno's philosophy and that of his "Danish brother," the father of Existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard, has been widely studied.[11] Both were deeply concerned with the rational impossibility of what religious faith would have us believe, and how this impossibility affects our personal existence. Much—too much, in my opinion—has been made of the differences between these two philosophers, oftentimes it seems in order to prove that Unamuno was indeed an original thinker. Collado's discussion, which focuses almost entirely on their differences, makes an error in his interpretation of Kierkegaard that is then repeated by others who use his study, which is admittedly impressive for its length and detail. Collado argues that God's existence was not in question for Kierkegaard: "En Kierkegaard … la existencia de Dios permanece incuestionable" (515). This argument is echoed by Sánchez-Barbudo, who

[11]This dissertation uses Collado's expansive study (1962), as well as shorter articles by Palmer (1969), Sobosan (1974), Csejtei (2001), Bandera (2003) and Wright (2004). Sánchez-Barbudo also discusses this relationship in his introduction (1981) to *Del sentimiento*.

states that "[l]a diferencia fundamental es que Kierkegaard, aunque angustiado como Unamuno …, parte de una firme creencia en Dios" (24), whose "existencia objetiva estaba fuera de duda" (40). Sobosan takes the misinterpretation even farther by referring to "Kierkegaard's ultimately happy situation wherein man's rational intellect serves his spirit in loving and seeking one thing" (141). It is hard to reconcile this view of Kierkegaard's philosophy with his statement under the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio, "I cannot close my eyes and throw myself trustingly into the absurd, for me it is impossible, but I do not praise myself on that account" (*Fear and Trembling* 63), or that "the most stupid thing ever said about [Christianity] is, that it is to a certain degree true" ("Subjective Truth" 205). Because Kierkegaard uses pseudonyms and often uses others as examples, it is hard to say with any certainty what he actually believed. However, to claim that God's objective existence was beyond all doubt for him is an overstatement, and his writings would lead most to conclude the opposite. Palmer, one of the first to study the relationship after the appearance of Collado's book, shows a clearer understanding of Kierkegaard's views, and regrettably more critics writing after him did not give his study more serious attention. "Unamuno and Kierkegaard seem to know rationally that at the end nothing awaits us; yet, by virtue of the absurd, they refuse to acquiesce to fate" (306).

Palmer shows, through a letter Unamuno wrote to Clarín on April 3, 1900, that at this time Unamuno was planning to read Kierkegaard (308). What cannot be proven is if and when Unamuno read *Fear and Trembling*, the essay that deals most directly with the problem of faith. However, Palmer argues, and I agree with him, that Unamuno must have read this essay at least in part before writing *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* in 1904.

He finds evidence for this in the change in tone between this book and his 1898 essay "¡Muera Don Quijote!," as well as in Unamuno's use of the expression "knight of faith," which only appears in *Fear and Trembling* (308-10). Seven years after he wrote *Vida*, in *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno also makes reference to the Kierkegaardian leap (67), a central concept of *Fear and Trembling*. It is important to consider whether or not Unamuno read this particular essay because it bears directly on the arguments of *Del sentimiento*, which in turn gives us a picture of a modern theme that is truly tragic. I do not, however, wish to go any further into the specific arguments about exactly how much influence Kierkegaard had on Unamuno, and to what extent Unamuno's thinking was original. It is clear that, to a certain extent, Unamuno was original; he developed many "Kierkegaardian" views before ever having read him, as a result of his crisis of 1897. At the same time, as we will see in his drama, the strong influence of Kierkegaard is also clear, particularly in his later writings, where some of his earlier concepts seem to be refined as a result of having read Kierkegaard. Csejtei reminds us that, regardless of the exact level of Kierkegaardian influence in his writings, Unamuno played a crucial role in being one of the first to introduce Kierkegaard to the mainstream of European thought and that "[w]ith the spiritual association of the Danish and Spanish-Basque thinkers, the entire European culture has become richer" (721).

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard bases his discussion of faith on the Biblical story of Abraham, ordered by God to kill his only son Isaac. For Abraham to be considered a true Knight of Faith, according to Kierkegaard, he must have recognized the rational absurdity of the order, since God had previously promised that his son would father a great nation. He must also have recognized how absolutely inexplicable his

actions would be to the rest of society, and yet continued with faith in spite of this, willing to sacrifice his only son and yet equally convinced God would keep his promise to him. For a person to have true faith, it is imperative that they recognize the rational absurdity of their object of faith. This stands in contrast to simple, or blind faith, characterized by its unwillingness or inability to consider the rational absurdity, which therefore explains why a person with blind faith would be considered inauthentic. True faith is paradoxical; how can one believe what they know to be rationally absurd? Yet Kierkegaard, like Unamuno, considered matters of faith most important to an individual's existence ("Subjective Truth" 176).

Unamuno, painfully aware through his own personal crisis of how recognizing such rational absurdity can destroy one's faith, seems at times to wish to return to the blind faith of his youth, and at others to scoff at those with blind faith for being inauthentic and lacking intelligence. We see Unamuno's desire to return to blind faith in examples such as the constant repetition of the desire to *aniñarse* throughout his drama. In *La Esfinge*, Ángel laments: "Quiero humillarme, ser como los sencillos, rezar como de niño, maquinalmente, por rutina" (163). María expresses a similar desire in the overtly allegorical *La venda*, choosing to blindfold herself instead of face the light of reason. Unamuno's nostalgia for the simple faith of his youth even leads him to make the arguable claim that the Catholic church, which "defiende la vida," "hizo bien" in "oponerse a Darwin y Galileo, porque sus descubrimientos quebrantaron la fe" (*Del sentimiento* 123). In the closing arguments of *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno insists: "El mundo quiere ser engañado *–mundus vult decipi—,* o con el engaño de antes de la razón, que es la poesía, o con el engaño de después de ella, que es la religión" (354). However,

if we remember Blasillo el bobo of *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*, or the fact that it is most often the uneducated *criadas* in his dramas that have faith, we see that Unamuno viewed blind faith as characteristic of an intellectual class to which he did not belong. In *Una vida tranquila* (1924), a writing from Unamuno's collection of mono-dialogues—which in this case is actually a dialogue between two people—, Unamuno's attitude towards those with blind faith changes from recognition of a more innocent simplicity to one of accusation of cowardice and hypocrisy: "Y se ha hecho usted tonto por miedo … por miedo a la verdad, o sea por miedo a la inteligencia que le descubre." And when asked, "¿Es que hay verdades?," he responds, "Sí; que impiden la tranquilidad de eso que usted llama vida y que de vida nada tiene" (*O. C.*, V 1181).

The last quote shows again, however, Unamuno's scorn for reason and "truth," which he views as *anti-vital*, a view that creates tension in his views on authenticity. In *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno calls it "estupenda hipocresía" that the "racionalistas ... se empeñan en convencer al hombre que hay motivos para vivir y hay consuelo de haber nacido" (146). It would seem, then, that Unamuno considers the claim that a mortal life can still have meaning an example of even greater inauthenticity than simple blind faith. In his discussion of*La Esfinge* and *La venda*, Summerhill concludes the following about Unamuno's views on the issue of blind faith and authenticity: "[R]eal sight is the wish to see the invisible even if one is unable, while blindness is the state of not caring about the invisible or accepting that the visible is all there is" (238). Ultimately Unamuno defends those with a simple faith against the "rabia antiteológica" of the "racionalistas" to whom "les molesta y duele que otros crean en [otra vida]" (*Del sentimiento* 146). However, while Unamuno argues against ridiculing those with faith, he speaks of "un más terrible

ridículo, y es el ridículo de uno ante sí mismo y para consigo. Es mi razón, que se burla de mi fe y la desprecia" (331).

One cannot consider the question of authenticity in Kierkegaard or Unamuno without discussing the importance of passion in an individual's existence. In his essay from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, "The Subjective Truth, Inwardness, Truth is Subjectivity," Kierkegaard asks, "When one man investigates objectively the problem of immortality, and another embraces an uncertainty with the passion of the infinite: where is there most truth, and who has greater certainty?" (180). Assuming Unamuno read this passage, the influence it had on his own philosophy is clear, and it helps explain how uncertainty became "santa" and "dulce" for him. Unamuno discusses the primary role of passion in determining what is most meaningful to the existing individual in his discussion of Don Quijote, which has been, not surprisingly, compared to Kierkegaard's Abraham in literary criticism as well as in philosophy. Don Quijote is a hero to Unamuno by virtue of "la magnitud de las pasiones" (Bandera 126). Passion, which springs from the heart and is a counter to the lackluster nature of cool rationalization, is Unamuno's key to all that is meaningful in life. This is why Unamuno states that rational proof of God's existence would not satisfy as much as "una eterna esperanza que de realizarse moriría" (*Del sentimiento* 280). His ideal vision of the afterlife, in fact, is not one of peace in arriving at God, but rather one of eternal hope and the necessary lacking that accompanies it, "eterna esperanza que eternamente se renueva sin acabarse del todo nunca. Y con ello un eterno carecer de algo" (*Del sentimiento* 290-91). Passion and hope are intimately connected for Unamuno; by hoping with passion, we arrive at the doorstep of belief (Muyskens 248-51). What we are passionate about defines who we

are. For this reason, in revolt against the inauthentic, superficial, bourgeois theater of his time, Unamuno wanted to bring passion back to the Spanish theater. As he states in his *Exordio* to *Fedra*, "a nuestra actual dramaturgia española le falta pasión, sobre todo pasión, le falta tragedia, le falta drama, le falta intensidad" (304).

The previous quote by Kierkegaard also introduces the concept of the subjective nature of truth: an uncertainty held to with passion holds more truth for the existing individual subjectively than an abstract, rational proof. Unamuno holds the same view, and it is this view that leads him to claim that faith creates its object. "La fe es, pues, si no potencia creativa, flor de la voluntad, y su oficio crear. La fe crea, en cierto modo, su objeto" (*Del sentimiento* 234). For this reason, "creer en Dios es hoy … querer que Dios exista" (235). In a similar fashion, Unamuno believes that, through our passions, we create the self. Summerhill argues that Unamuno "eventually developed the idea that the soul is not a pre-existing principle of human life, but a project each person must create … the soul is not already given but it is a function of desire, what he called "querer ser"" (235). Or, as Unamuno also puts it: "Vine al mundo a hacer mi yo" (*Del sentimiento* 99).

Unamuno's discussion of the self and its relationship with others makes him a remarkable precursor to later existentialists such as Camus and Sartre. It is the relationship with others that brings up the question of Don Quijote's and Abraham's insanity. "This is one of the reasons why Kierkegaard's Abraham must be judged insane along with Unamuno's Quijote. They are in absolute isolation. They are unable to communicate with their fellows" (Palmer 302). As Unamuno states in his *Vida*, "Cosa tan grande como terrible la de tener una misión de que solo es sabedor el que la tiene y no

puede a los demás hacerles creer en ella … ¿No recordáis al héroe de la fe, a Abraham, en el monte Moria?" (38).[12] Unfortunately, it is reason that we must use to make ourselves understood to others, and yet subjective truths, which are the truths that are of most importance to existence, are characterized as such precisely because they are not rationally provable. In *La Esfinge*, Ángel laments the failings of reason as the only means by which one person can communicate with another: "¿[P]or qué no habrían de entenderse directamente las almas, en íntimo toque, y no a través de esta grosera corteza y por signos?" (183).

As Unamuno makes plain in the first chapter of *Del sentimiento*, his focus is on the existing individual, *el hombre de carne y hueso*. The self, or the *yo*, is central, the starting point from which to understand his philosophy. "Y este hombre concreto, de carne y hueso, es el sujeto y el supremo objeto a la vez de toda filosofía" (58). Unamuno's discussion of the self is directly connected with his more general discussion of the desire for immortality. The self's relationship to others is governed by the desire to perpetuate the self, the paradoxical desire of wanting to be the self, *querer ser yo*, while wanting to be everything and everyone else, *querer serlo todo*, without ceasing to exist as the original self. "¡Más, más y cada vez más; quiero ser yo, y sin dejar de serlo, ser además los otros" (92). Unamuno uses repeatedly in his literature the story of Cain and Abel to illustrate this philosophy. In *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno links this Biblical struggle specifically to the desire for immortality. "No fue lucha por pan, fue lucha por sobrevivir en Dios, en la memoria divina. La envidia es mil veces más terrible que el

[12] Cesáreo Bandera's article "El quijotismo de Unamuno y la envidia" has an interesting analysis of this passage in which he discusses the lack of differentiation between a hero

hambre, porque es hambre espiritual" (107). Even love is often selfish according to Unamuno, because it is governed by a desire to possess the other: "[C]ada uno de los amantes busca poseer al otro, y buscando mediante él … su propia perpetuación, que es el fin, ¿qué es sino avaricia?" (181).

Unamuno's view of human relationships in *Del sentimiento* outlined thus far, however, only points to what is often described as selfishness, or *egoísmo*. It would be an incomplete discussion of this topic were we not to address Unamuno's very positive view of love as providing lives with meaning, as well as his desire for human beings to recognize a common fate and thereby, our universality. Of human kindness Unamuno states: "La bondad es la mejor fuente de clarividencia espiritual" (81). He also claims that love is "[lo] único que rellena y eterniza la vida" (92). Unamuno distinguishes between carnal love, characterized by the desire to possess, and spiritual love. "Amar en espíritu es compadecer, y quien más compadece más ama" (183). He claims that maternal love is the supreme example of this spiritual love and, rather confidently, that "en la mujer todo amor es maternal" (183). In order to feel pity or sympathy for another, we must recognize that the other is *un alma* just like ourselves. Unamuno admires Kant's claim that we must treat others as an end in themselves, and not as a means—a claim that leads Unamuno to call Kant's transition from the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the *Critique of Practical Reason* a Kierkegaardian leap—because this represents the recognition of our universality as existing, seemingly mortal, individuals. Only through such recognition can we overcome our selfishness. Unamuno's theater is motivated in part by his desire for people to share together the human tragedy. This

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and a saint for Unamuno.

tendency towards the community also distinguishes him from Kierkegaard. As Cjestei convincingly concludes:

> The fundamental difference between the Kierkegaardian and Unamunian formation of the Knight of Faith is that in Unamuno, in spite of the strong and constant emphasis upon singularity, there burns the claim to a redeemer whose activity would constantly strive after the spiritual regeneration of his people, his nation. In the Kierkegaardian form of the Knight of Faith, self-redemption is something absolute and cannot be surpassed, whereas the Unamunian Knight of Faith can conceive his redemption only by virtue of the redemption of his people, or, in an even more generalized way, of humanity as such. (721)

Indeed, Unamuno believed in the power of a community lament, and for this reason he endeavored to bring this about through his writing. "Y estoy convencido de que resolveríamos muchas cosas si saliendo a la calle, y poniendo a luz nuestras penas, que acaso resultasen una sola pena común, nos pusiéramos en común a llorarlas y a dar gritos al cielo y a llamar a Dios" (72).

The Tragic Sense of Life as a Foundation for Modern Tragedy

The benefits that Unamuno imagines would come from a community lament of the tragedy of life adds a hopeful purpose to his works that express his tragic view, particularly to his drama. "[E]l proyecto que Unamuno propone es el de una filosofía de la esperanza que él fundamenta en una teoría de la tragedia" (Flórez 299). As we will see in the fourth chapter, the idea that hope can come from tragedy seems to have influenced

Antonio Buero Vallejo's *tragedia esperanzada*, which he proposes in defense against those who label tragedy pessimistic. Unamuno also defends his tragic view against those who call it pessimistic. "El pesimismo que protesta y se defiende, no puede decirse que sea tal pesimismo. Y desde luego no lo es, en rigor, el que reconoce que nada debe hundirse aunque se hunda todo" (*Del sentimiento* 298). Of course, one can detect a hint of sarcasm in Unamuno's self-defense. This is even more apparent in his *Credo optimista* (1913), in which Unamuno affirms his great confidence in social and scientific progress, but that "todo ello no vale un comino sin lo otro" (*O. C.* V, 1014). Unamuno's tone progresses towards nihilism as he concludes: "No me tenga, pues, por pesimista. Reserve ese dictado para los que sólo prevén desdichas acá en la tierra, en este valle de lágrimas, cuando no hay otra desdicha que nacer. Yo creo lo mismo da que sea de lágrimas o de risas, mientras no tenga salida" (1014).

Nevertheless, if we recall, in Unamuno's crisis of 1897, when his desperation reached its peak, he felt pushed to believe in God, and this made him hopeful. Unamuno refers to hope that can come from "el fondo del abismo" repeatedly throughout *Del sentimiento*. For example, he says that "la desesperación del sentimiento vital ha de fundar su esperanza" (156), and that "[d]e lo hondo de esa congoja, del abismo del sentimiento de nuestra mortalidad, se sale a la luz de otro cielo, como de lo hondo del infierno salió Dante a volver a ver las estrellas" (94-95). Even Steiner, who, as we recall, claims tragedy is not possible today because we are too overly optimistic, seems to detect a somewhat bittersweet element of hope at the end of tragedy. "Hence there is in the final moments of great tragedy, ... a fusion of grief and joy, of lament over the fall of man and of rejoicing in the resurrection of his spirit" (10). Undoubtedly, Unamuno affirms

that recognition of the tragedy of life can serve as a call to action, much as it did in his own life. "[E]s el conflicto mismo, es la misma apasionada incertidumbre lo que unifica mi acción y me hace obrar" (294). He then insists that uncertainty, doubt and perpetual struggle "pueden ser base de moral" (295), and that "[e]l fin de la moral es dar finalidad humana, personal, al Universo; descubrir la que tenga —si es que la tiene— y descubrirla obrando" (297).

In many ways, Unamuno's view of tragedy is compatible with Aristotle's. For one, as is apparent in his view that poetry and philosophy are *hermanos gemelos* (63), he believes that we learn from poetry and, in a very Aristotelian fashion, he claims that learning is the highest pleasure: "El placer, el deleite más puro del hombre, va unido al acto de aprender, de enterarse" (266).[13] Much as Aristotle sees consolation coming from catharsis, Unamuno also believes that experiencing the tragedy of life will lead us to consolation. "[D]el fondo de estas miserias surge vida nueva, y sólo apurando las heces del dolor espiritual puede llegarse a gustar la miel del poso de la copa de la vida. La congoja nos lleva al consuelo" (108). Unamuno's view of tragedy as a call to action implies that tragedy leads to improvement, as Aristotle held, and not to the weakening of its audience, as Plato claimed. However, Unamuno's consolation is somewhat different from the sort that Aristotle envisioned. Unamuno does not claim that the consolation of tragedy springs from a recognition that our world is ordered by laws of cause and effect, as Lear's interpretation of Aristotle's catharsis suggests. The consolation that Unamuno

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[13] It is important to mention that Unamuno distinguishes this, the act of discovering, from knowing, *el conocer*. This would explain why Unamuno is also able to say that "es una verdadera enfermedad, y trágica, la que nos da el apetito de conocer por gusto del

speaks of comes from confronting the tragedy head on and thereby achieving a greater spiritual authenticity, which should lead to hope. And, as we have just seen, there is also the consolation that comes from recognizing the universality of the human condition. In his drama, Unamuno seems to have taken it as his personal mission to urge his readers to confront the tragedy of life, thus offering them the consolation as well. In the closing lines of *Del sentimiento* he asks, "¿Cuál es, pues, la nueva misión de Don Quijote hoy en este mundo? Clamar, clamar en el desierto," which, in turn, "un día se convertirá en selva sonora" (355).

As we will see in greater detail in the fourth and fifth chapters of this study, Buero, who was strongly influenced by Unamuno, develops the tragic struggle between hope and doubt in his own drama, dealing sometimes with existential questions regarding the meaning of our existence, and at others with explicitly social questions. Most often, there is an element of both in his works. Much as Unamuno claims recognition of his tragic sense of life can prompt us to work towards discovering the meaning of our existence, recognizing what is socially tragic can prompt us to work towards social improvement. In the tragedies of both authors, strong doubt provoked by reason looms over the characters, casting a shadow on any attempt at hope for a positive answer to those questions that reason threatens to answer negatively. For example, will there be life after death? What is the purpose of existence? What is the nature of the self? Or, are human beings capable of avoiding war? Of treating all members of a society equally? Confronted with such questions, using Unamuno's language, the heart wants to believe in the affirmative, yet the head is skeptical and leads us to doubt.

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conocimiento mismo" (76). Nevertheless, he also claims that "[n]o hay, en efecto, más

These questions are indeed relevant today. Statistics show that fewer claim to have religious faith than ever before, yet the struggle between the Church and the community of non-believers continues. Currently in Kansas, there is a movement by a religious constituency pushing to make Darwinism an optional element of the public school science curriculum because they feel, as Unamuno noted almost one hundred years ago, that Darwinism threatens their faith. Similarly, a decreasing interest in politics and social movements in the Americas and in Europe seems to suggest that more and more people feel, as Unamuno did, that "todo ello no vale un comino." Yet, it is hard to imagine that all hope is dead. Tragedy, by forcing us to confront what is tragic about modern times, encourages a greater level of authenticity, which should lead to the hope of surpassing our limitations. By following and sharing similar views with Kierkegaard, Unamuno introduces into the mainstream of the Spanish-speaking world the beginnings of existential thought, particularly by outlining where reason falls short in providing us with the answers that are of significance to our existence. *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* exposes the role of reason as leading us to doubt our faith, be it in a benevolent God and immortality, or in the ability of progress to achieve a social utopia here on earth, while simultaneously reaffirming the existential importance of hoping for these things all the same. These are the "castillos en el aire" that "se han venido abajo" to which Doménech referred (112), and with their fall, a modern view of the world that is truly tragic appears, thereby opening the door to modern tragedy.

The Development of Unamuno's Theater

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perfecto dominio que el conocimiento; el que conoce algo, lo posee" (272).

"[S]on sobre todo razones más profundas, existenciales, en última instancia, las que hacen que Unamuno, ensayista, novelista, poeta, tenga que escribir también teatro" (Lasagabaster 9). It is well known that Unamuno had very little success with his theater.[14] Manual García Blanco reminds us that "pues bien sabido es que Unamuno sintió como accidentales los llamados géneros literarios" (7). Unamuno rarely attended the theater himself, and yet he refused to publish his own dramas before they were represented on the stage, which explains why so few were published even after his death (*O. C.* V, 7). To this day, his drama is comparatively little studied. Other than the comprehensive studies of Manuel García Blanco, Andrés Franco and Iris M. Zavala, there are a collection of essays on Unamuno's theater edited by Jesús María Lasagabaster, Luis González-del-Valle's comparative study on the tragedy of Unamuno, Valle-Inclán and García Lorca, and a handful of smaller studies on particular works. Without a doubt, *Fedra* and *El otro* have received the most critical attention. In his lifetime, however, Unamuno did not experience any major success with his theater, either financial or critical. Yet while he may have considered literary genres accidental, something drove Unamuno to write eleven dramas and outline upwards of twenty-five more (*O. C.* V). We must therefore consider briefly what led Unamuno to compose drama.

"[A]l defender una mitologización de la razón [Unamuno] aspira a hacer hueco dentro de la filosofía a la conciencia creyente" (Flórez 294). Unamuno's existential philosophy of the tragic sense of life transfers itself quite easily to literature. In fact,

[14] For a complete summary of Unamuno's attempts to have his dramas represented as well as many examples of criticism from his friends and critics, I recommend Manuel

Unamuno's attempt to mythologize reason in order to discuss what lies beyond it seems a key motivating factor in his prolific literary creation. It is well known that Unamuno tries to break down the barrier that separates philosophy from poetry; "[L]a filosofía se acuesta más a la poesía que no a la ciencia" (*Del sentimiento* 58). Unamuno also believes that Spain in particular has always best expressed its philosophy through literature. "Pues abrigo cada vez más la convicción de que nuestra filosofía, la filosofía española, está líquida y difusa en nuestra literatura, en nuestra vida, en nuestra acción, en nuestra mística, sobre todo, y no en sistemas filosóficas. Es concreta" (337). In her study on the relationship between existential thought and the fictional technique of Kierkegaard, Sartre and Beckett, Edith Kern argues that existential philosophy is particularly well suited for expression through literature. "From its inception, existential thought has felt itself at home in fiction" (vii). She cites Unamuno's view that the philosophy of the *hombre de carne y hueso* is closer to poetry than to a science and concludes that "the paradox and absurdity of life can be more readily deduced from fundamental human situations portrayed in fiction than described in the logical language of philosophy" (vii). In addition, the self, or *yo,* of existential philosophy is best expressed subjectively in the first person. In drama, each character is given a first-person voice and consequently, a presence as subjectivity. For this reason, it seems drama is in many ways the ideal genre to portray an existential philosophy concerned with subjective existence, as well as relationships with others who, in turn, also exist subjectively.

Unamuno is not only drawn to literature as an ideal means to express his philosophy, he is also drawn to it as a means to expose those elements of the human

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García Blanco's introduction to volume V of Unamuno's *Obras Completas*, and Andrés

condition that he feels have been neglected: "No he querido callar lo que callan los otros; he querido poner al desnudo, no ya mi alma, sino el alma humana" (*Del sentimiento* 173). Sánchez-Barbudo sees another, more personal motivation for Unamuno's writing: "Muchas veces se tiene la impresión de que con su pelea y con sus gritos lo que hace, conscientemente o no, es acallar su más íntima pena, el vacío de su corazón" (28). Writing, then, would afford Unamuno the same catharsis that he hopes his readers will get reading his works. Sánchez-Barbudo also suggests that drama, perhaps more so than other genres, served as a confessional for Unamuno, pointing to a letter written to Clarín on May 9, 1900, in which he admits "en mi drama me he confesado" (10). It is also quite easy to imagine that Unamuno saw the theater as a sort of religious temple where the spectators would recognize and lament together the tragic sense of life. "Lo más santo de un templo es que es el lugar a que se va a llorar en común. Un *Miserere* cantado en común por una muchedumbre, azotada del destino, vale tanto como una filosofía. No basta curar la peste, hay que saber llorarla. ¡Sí, hay que saber llorar!" (*Del sentimiento* 72).

With a better sense of what Unamuno hoped to achieve through his drama established, it is now useful to consider how his drama, as well as his views on theater in general, developed over the more than thirty years that his dramatic production spans. Ignacio Elizalde argues that in his early theater Unamuno was most influenced by Ibsen. "Es ciertamente indiscutible que en la dramática española Unamuno es el autor que más se acerca a la esencia del teatro de ideas ibseniano. Don Miguel luchó por el teatro simbólico" (52). I would argue that Unamuno's theater never completely divorced itself

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Franco's *El teatro de Unamuno*.

from Ibsen and the "theater of ideas" or "problem play" and he continued to produce symbolic theater, in the sense that his characters continue to be symbols for ideas, up through his last play, *El hermano Juan* (1929).[15] Urszula Aszyk also argues that while Unamuno's theater refines itself over time, it never completely loses its ties with "el concepto del teatro que en 1899 define como teatro de ideas" (39). Elizalde sees a shift in Unamuno's style after his second play *La venda* (1899), towards a theater more explicitly concerned with *el hombre de carne y hueso* (57). *La venda* is without a doubt Unamuno's most allegorical work; it is perhaps his only overtly allegorical play. But this play is unique in Unamuno's dramatic production for this very reason and therefore, I would not consider it and *La Esfinge* (1898) representative of an entire stylistic "period" in Unamuno's theater. This is clear if we consider how much more in common, both thematically and stylistically, *La Esfinge* has with *Soledad* (1921), written more than two decades later, than it does with *La venda*, which was written only months after his first drama. As testament to the strong ties between *La Esfinge* and *Soledad* we need only mention D. L. Shaw's comparative study on the similar uses of symbolism in both dramas, and the section in Andrés Franco's chapter on *Soledad* titled "Refundición de *La Esfinge*." However, one could make the case that the two earliest dramas represent a "period" temporally; Unamuno waited ten years after *La venda* before writing his next play, this time a comedy, *La princesa doña Lambra* (1909). Franco quite reasonably attributes this break in Unamuno's dramatic production to the difficult time he was having getting the first two dramas represented on the stage (14). *La Esfinge*'s long-

[15] In a recently published article by Sarah Wright, "Ethical Seductions: A Comparative Reading of unamuno's *El Hermano Juan* and Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*" (2004), she quite

awaited appearance in the theater in 1909 coincides with a renewed interest in writing drama for Unamuno.

Aszyk bases her insightful study of the development of Unamuno's theater on a wide variety of his writings that previously had not been considered together. She notes that Unamuno may have been one of the earliest to criticize the contemporary Spanish theater at the end of the nineteenth century in his first article on the subject, "La regeneración del teatro español" (1896). In this article, Unamuno criticizes that "el teatro, los dramaturgos, el público y los críticos, todos ellos se quedaron encerrados en el mismo círculo del teatro burgués" (30). Unamuno was highly critical of realist theater and the exaggerations of naturalist theater. For this reason, Unamuno writes in a later article, "Teatro de teatro" (1899), "¡Todo es inverosímil! Tal debe ser nuestro lema" (Elizalde 64). However, Unamuno's rejection of verisimilitude does not stem solely from his rejection of realism and naturalism, nor is it something that ought to be linked to his earlier theater of ideas alone. This rejection of verisimilitude also reflects the subordination of what he considered unnecessary and inconsequential details to the *verdad íntima* with which his drama was primarily concerned. As late as 1932, Unamuno continues to express the same attitude towards verisimilitude in his *Autocrítica* to *El otro* (1926), published six years after he completed the play itself.

> Claro está que como en este "misterio" lo que importa es la verdad íntima, profunda, del drama del alma, no me anduve en esas minucias del arte realista de justificar entradas y salidas de los sujetos y hacer coherentes

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convincingly argues that don Juan symbolizes the various stages of existence in Kierkegaard's essay, the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious.

> otros detalles. Eso está bien cuando se trata de fantoches, marionetas o muñecos. (654)

As we have already seen, throughout his dramatic production, Unamuno is deeply concerned with the creation of real characters—better yet, people—that reflect a true human soul; he wants to present to the audience a true *hombre de carne y hueso*. Unamuno expresses the same desire through his autobiographical Agustín, the protagonist of *Soledad*. Agustín, like Unamuno, is a dramatist struggling to adequately transfer to the page his *verdad íntima*. He explains his drama as such: "Discutirán mis personajes... ¡No! Personas, pero por su cuenta y para mostrar su alma ... Voy a crear almas, a poner almas ante las almas ... Porque necesito crear almas..., necesito crear..., crearnos..., crearme..., y nada de tribuna ni de cátedra..." (483). Following his growing emphasis on the desire to *crear personas*, according to Aszyk, Unamuno's *teatro inverosímil* develops into his *tragedia desnuda*, which he later calls *teatro poético* (40). Unamuno gives us the definition of his "naked tragedy" in 1918, in the *Exordio* to his sixth drama, *Fedra* (1911). "Llamo desnudo en la tragedia o desnudez trágica al efecto que se obtiene presentando la tragedia en toda su augusta y solemne majestad. Libre primero de todos los perifollos de la ornamentación escénica" (302). Naked tragedy will be free of "todo episodio de pura diversión, todo personaje de mero adorno, toda escena de mera transición o de divertimiento" (302).

Aszyk notes that, as he develops as a dramatist and as a theorist of drama, in his later theater, Unamuno "presta más atención a la relación: drama-escena, así como a la estética y forma del texto dramático" (39). As he focuses more attention on the dramatic text, Unamuno comes to be identified with *teatro poético.* Unamuno first explains his

view of *teatro poético* in his *Exordio*: "Es poesía y no oratoria dramática lo que he pretendido hacer. Y esto me parece que es tender al teatro poético y no ensartar rimas y más rimas, que a las veces no son sino elocuencia rimada, y de ordinario ni aun eso" (303). Ricardo Gullón—surprisingly, according to Doménech—identified Unamuno with symbolism and modernism for the first time in 1963, for his anguished, existential philosophy (114). However, Doménech argues:

> Reconocido Unamuno como escritor simbolista, hay que advertir en seguida que su teatro está muy lejos de la riqueza que, formalmente, tiene el de Valle-Inclán ... [P]or lo general, el lenguaje de estas obras es discursivo y carente de esa elaboración poética tan cuidadosa, tan minuciosa, que es habitual en este estilo. (115)

According to Aszyk, "Unamuno entiende por teatro poético un teatro contrario al cultivado por los modernistas y postrománticos" (40). Unamuno's description in his *Exordio* certainly seems to affirm Aszyk's statement. However, as we have seen, it is also possible to imagine Unamuno's theater as an example of modernist symbolism, assuming we keep in mind the obvious differences Doménech highlights.

Another function of *tragedia desnuda* and *teatro poético,* as we saw in the previous section, is to return passion to the Spanish theater. If we remember how intimately connected the human soul and the passions are for Unamuno, it makes sense that his naked tragedy, which has portraying a concrete person of flesh and blood as its goal, would focus primarily on human passions. Unamuno's focus on the inner truths of *personas* and not *personajes*, leads Zavala to call Unamuno's theater a "género interno." For the importance of ideas expressed through words and dialogue at the expense of all

the more decorative elements of theater in Unamuno's plays, Lucile Charlebois labels his drama a "teatro de palabras." The theater becomes for Unamuno a stage for the consciousness. Lasagabaster summarizes Unamuno as a dramatist in his introduction to *El teatro de Miguel de Unamuno*: "Aquí está seguramente la razón última del Unamuno escritor de teatro: la necesidad de la palabra teatral como exponente máximo de los dramas interiores, y del escenario como metáfora espectacular de la conciencia" (9). Regarding the relationship between a theater of consciousness and tragedy, Doménech claims the following: "Unamuno pretende hacer un *teatro de conciencia*. ¿Y qué otra cosa es la tragedia, desde *Edipo rey* hasta hoy, sino un teatro de conciencia?" (115).

Aszyk notes that Unamuno, in conceiving the regeneration of his contemporary theater, turned his attention to the origins of theater, to the religious ritual, the *misterio* (40). It is hard to consider the religious ritual as giving rise to modern theater without Nietzsche's Dionysian ritual in *The Birth of Tragedy* coming to mind. Aszyk also argues that Unamuno's *teatro poético* "se concentra en la función catártica del teatro" (40). As we saw in the previous chapter, Unamuno's conception of the consolation that springs from tragedy is very community-oriented, based on a desire for everyone to come together to "llorar en común" a tragic fate. Unamuno says that "el llorar sirve de algo, aunque no sea más que de desahogo" (*Del sentimiento* 72). Crying as "desahogo" can also be considered crying as catharsis; both terms refer here to a purging of an emotion. But just as Unamuno's views of faith are much less individualistic than Kierkegaard's, his view of catharsis also seems to progress beyond the individual to the community. Nietzsche's Dionysian ritual was the natural product of Greek tragedy as he conceived it. This ritual, which involves the destruction of the Apollonian *principium individuationis*

as a result of the Dionysian movement towards the community, in which the individual comes to recognize universality with humankind, is very much similar to Unamuno's catharsis. Both are founded on a strong sense of human universality, the recognition of which is a source of consolation in the face of tragedy. Aszyk notes that Unamuno's desire to return theater to the religious ritual, which he first discussed in "La regeneración del teatro español," is "impregnada de la creencia en la fraternidad universal, lo cual se traduce en el interés que Unamuno mostraba en aquel momento por los ideales socialistas, así como por la función social del arte" (39). While Unamuno may have changed his political opinions over the course of his life, his view of the universality of humankind, as well as his affection for theater as religious ritual, seem to have changed less. Remember that in *Del Sentimiento* Unamuno argues, "es que todas las almas humanas son hermanas" (326), and that he calls his penultimate drama, *El otro*, a *misterio*.

Aszyk concludes that Unamuno's theater was wrongly under-appreciated by his contemporary audience, and that in other parts of Europe his style of theater already existed (43). She also argues for Unamuno's recognition as a precursor to existentialist theater:

> [E]l teatro poético y filosófico del siglo XX ... después de la II guerra mundial tiene sus más destacados representantes en Sartre y Camus, reconocidos como creadores del teatro existencialista y, en el autor español de gran prestigio Antonio Buero Vallejo. Unamuno adelantó esta tendencia como dramaturgo. (29)

Summerhill argues that Unamuno contributed to positive development in Spanish theater even before World War II and that he, "anticipated the later flowering of modern theater during the 1920s and 1930s under such authors as Valle-Inclán, Jacinto Grau, García Lorca and others" (227). I agree with these critics that Unamuno's role in the development of Spanish theater in the twentieth century is significant, as well as too often neglected. However, we cannot simply brush aside his relative failure in the theater of his day as a symptom of the public's bad taste, as Aszyk wants to do. We must also consider some of the problems in Unamuno's dramas in order to find answers to why they seemed, and continue to seem, inaccessible to many of his readers.

Doménech argues that Unamuno's language in his dramas is attractive for his "tono de espontánea meditación en voz alta" (115). He also argues that Unamuno was a truly tragic figure, and his dramas truly tragic, even though they may not be examples of great tragedies. "Unamuno ocupa un lugar de excepción en el camino de la tragedia española moderna, no por ser autor de grandes tragedias, sino por ser el más trágico de nuestros escritores contemporáneos" (115). Doménech offers great insight as to why Unamuno's theater, while loved by few, is misunderstood by most: "Quienes comparten ese sentimiento trágico, suelen gustar del teatro unamuniano ... Quienes son insensibles a esa cosmovisión trágica, reparan sólo en su forma teatral poca elaborada" (115). One problem with Unamuno's tragedies is that they too explicitly and directly make the arguments of *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*. If a spectator does not feel with the same intensity as Unamuno the problem of immortality or of the self, too often there is little else for the spectator to feel fear or pity for. In his study of the tragedies of Unamuno, Valle-Inclán and García Lorca, González-del-Valle argues convincingly

through his analysis of *Fedra* and *Soledad* that, "[a]l teatro de tesis se opone don Miguel, mientras que favorece al docente" (63), but that "[l]a subordinación artística por parte de Unamuno y el excesivo énfasis que él pone en sus convicciones nos llevan a concluir que su teatro colinda con el de tesis" (64).

Unamuno's emphasis on the creation of a true human soul, one that embraces his tragic sense of life, and his rejection of verisimilitude, lead to the little attention he paid to the development of overall dramatic structure in his plays. Elizalde argues that "[e]l mismo enfoque personal o existencial de la realidad se opone a una aprehención total, realista de su mundo dramático" (63). In a personal letter written to Unamuno in January 1899, in which Jiménez Ilundain, who is at times exaggeratedly critical, comments on the first draft of *La Esfinge*, he mentions that many characters are unbelievable and that the drama as a whole lacks overall coherence. In Unamuno's response to Ilundain, written in May 1899, he states: "[N]o aspiro a un éxito teatral, si para conseguirlo he de sacrificar lo, a mi juicio, insacrificable" (*O. C.* V, 29). Unamuno was not unaware of the problems that critics continue to find in his theater; he was obstinate in his unwillingness to bother himself with those details that he felt, as we have already seen, were a distraction from the central tragic theme. It is my argument that, while a tragedy is not hurt by a lack of elaborate costumes and scenery, it *is* damaged by unbelievable characters and actions, for this is an enormous obstacle in the path of coming to feel fear and pity for the characters, which is essential to tragedy. This is why Aristotle prefers in his *Poetics* a "convincing impossibility" to an "unconvincing possibility" (1461b 9-12). Elizalde points to another factor that limited Unamuno's characters' ability to be ones that the audience could relate to: his characters often represented one particular category of the self, in particular, of

his—Unamuno's—self. "Cada persona es una máscara de las categorías del ser, que luego, todas juntas, integran el verdadero hombre" and he adds that Unamuno "[l]e dirá al lector que todos sus personajes se les parecen" (58). For this parsing of the self, Unamuno's characters often represent one idea, which deprives them of the complexity of human nature that would make them more believable and therefore easier to feel emotions for.

Existential tragedy, as we have already seen, is in one sense irredeemably un-Aristotelian, given that the great existential tragedy, the apparent meaninglessness of existence, is not the result of a human error, the *hamartia* upon which Aristotle insisted. However, what is tragic in existential terms can stand as a framework within which a genuine tragedy compatible with the *Poetics* can be created, much as Steiner argues that Greek mythology was an ideal framework for Greek tragedy. In this sense, then, what Aristotle says about how a tragedy is constructed is still relevant to modern tragedy, even though we can argue that the nature of tragic themes has shifted in modern times. The faults of Unamuno's theater that we have been considering thus far would be considered faults by Aristotle as well. His greatest fault is, in my opinion, his rejection of verisimilitude. Mimesis is the representation of reality, and with Unamuno's rejection of the realist movement—which he could have done without opting for *lo inverosímil*—, he throws aside Aristotle's most important criteria for all poets, and thereby inhibits his audience from feeling his tragic sense of life. Pastras points to another problem of Unamuno's tragedy, which is a problem he links to romantic tragedy in general. He argues that Unamuno spends too much time on the pathos, or the scene of suffering, and in doing so demotes all other elements of tragedy, such as the reversal and recognition.

He argues that this focus on suffering, which is often a photographic representation of Unamuno's personal suffering, ends up revealing little more than the psychology of the author (186). An extended scene of suffering is even more intolerable if the spectator has not been given the opportunity to share in the suffering, as better character development would allow. All of these faults in Unamuno's dramas undermine the goal of tragedy, which is the catharsis of the fear and pity caused by the tragedy. As we will see through the analysis of his plays in the next chapter, however, these faults do not make Unamuno's works un-tragic, but they do make them less accessible tragedies.

Chapter 3: The Tragedies of Miguel de Unamuno

This chapter will analyze three Unamunian dramas that can be called tragedies: *La Esfinge* (1898), *La venda* (1899) and *Fedra* (1911). *La Esfinge* and *La venda* were chosen in part because they have received so little attention. As his two earliest plays, they reveal Unamuno's inexperience with theater and are therefore somewhat weaker technically. Yet they also reveal the beginnings of a dramatic technique that Unamuno would greatly improve in later works, such as *Fedra* and *El otro* (1926). *La Esfinge* was also chosen because this drama was written so soon after Unamuno's crisis of 1897, and as a consequence, deals with several tragic themes that he would later describe so vividly in *Del sentimiento*. *La venda*'s allegorical style makes it unique among Unamuno's other dramas, and for this reason alone it is interesting to consider. More importantly, *La venda*'s portrayal of the destruction of religious faith, which is central to *Del sentimiento* as well as to this dissertation's argument about the perseverence of tragedy in the modern age, makes this drama a crucial illustration of the movements of modern tragedy. *Fedra* was chosen as a modernization of a classic tragedy that lends itself particularly well to an analysis that wishes to establish a connection between classic and modern tragedy. This is the only drama that Unamuno calls a tragedy. In addition, I consider *Fedra* Unamuno's most engaging and enjoyable drama. Nevertheless, any selection of works to analyze is bound, to some extent, to be arbitrary, and several works worthy of consideration are inevitably left out. For example, *Soledad* (1921), *Sombras de Sueño* (1926) and *El otro* are intriguing dramas that could arguably be called tragedies. They, along with *Fedra*, are all examples from Unamuno's "mature" period and show an

improvement in his dramatic technique. However, given that Unamuno is prone to repeating the same ideas throughout his works, I believe that this selection of dramas is sufficient to cover those Unamunian themes that are most relevant to what he calls the tragic sense of life.

***La Esfinge:[16] Drama en tres actos* (1898)**

Unamuno's first attempt at drama results in a surprisingly good play, in spite of its being burdened with the same problems of accessibility that we see in his other plays. Written just one year after his crisis of 1897, "resultaba casi inevitable que en el tono y en el acento del actante resonaran los de quien, al crearlo, buscaba espejo para reconocerse y analizarse" (Gullón 231). In this play, Ángel, the leader of a revolutionary movement about which we know little, becomes so preoccupied with the question of immortality that he abandons the revolutionary cause, manifesting a suspicion Unamuno would express later in *Del sentimiento* about the actions of heroes: "Creo ... que muchos de los más grandes héroes, acaso los mayores, han sido desesperados, y que por desesperación acabaron sus hazañas" (179). Ángel's wife, Eufemia, does not understand his religious crisis and she, along with his revolutionary comrades, urges him to continue the fight for freedom. Eventually, Eufemia leaves him because of his aggressive and peculiar behavior, concluding he has gone mad. Ángel seeks refuge in the house of Felipe, the one friend who has not abandoned him, who is a symbol of religious faith and the only

[16] This title appears in literary criticism both capitalized, *La Esfinge*, and left in the lower-case, *La esfinge*. In Volume V of Unamuno's *Obras completas*, Manuel García Blanco, perhaps the most authoritative voice on Unamuno's theater, has opted for the capitalized version, and I have followed his lead.

companion of Ángel's pushing him towards inwardness and religious contemplation. The revolutionary masses, angered by Ángel's betrayal, discover him in Felipe's house. Ángel confronts the crowd, but in the end insults them, and he is stoned and shot fatally. At this moment, Eufemia returns to Ángel and, seeing his injury, shouts, "Hijo mío", echoing the words spoken to Unamuno by his wife when she awoke to his sobs during the crisis of 1897 (*Del sentimiento* 12). Ángel's dying wish is that she sing him a *canto de cuna* and that death hold peace for him.

Unamuno first considered calling this drama *Gloria o paz*, or *La muerte es paz*, but in the end settled on *La Esfinge*, the enigmatic figure that holds the answer to life's big question, *¿Para qué?* (*O. C.* V, 8). These titles reveal the central theme of this work to which all other themes are related: the struggle between glory, which represents the attempt to give a mortal life meaning, and peace, which comes from faith in immortality. From this basic struggle at the heart of *La Esfinge*, many related themes worthy of discussion in themselves emerge, such as the idealization of blind faith, the futility of existence, the question of authenticity, the relationship of the self with the other, and the nature of freedom. All of these topics, as we saw in the previous chapter, are central to Unamuno's tragic sense of life. We will first consider Unamuno's treatment of these themes as tragic, as well as their presentation in the work itself, and then conclude with an analysis of Unamuno's dramatic technique in *La Esfinge*, with some comments on its merits and weaknesses as an example of modern tragedy.

In Andrés Franco's chapter on this play, he argues that "Don Miguel siempre está presente en sus dramas, pero en esta pieza ocupa él, claramente visible detrás del artificio literario, el centro del tablado" (59). Ángel, much like Unamuno himself, is obsessed

with the idea of the nothingness that reason tells him follows death. Speaking to his wife, he confesses his affliction: "Es una obsesión, Eufemia, que no me deja. Esa nada, esa nada terrible que se me presenta en cuanto cierro los ojos..." (182). The seemingly inevitable absorption into nothingness at death leads him to conclude that all human endeavors in life are futile. "Día llegará en que a esta vieja tierra le tocará su turno y, hecha también polvo, se esparcirá por los espacios llevándose nuestra ciencia, nuestro arte, nuestra civilización toda reducida a aerolitos pelados" (146). In scene VIII of the first act, the game of chess serves as a symbol of the futility of life and the revolutionary struggle in a fashion similar to that of Sisyphus' condemnation to push a rock up a hill every day, only to watch it roll back down, would later symbolize the futility of life for Camus. As Ángel idly plays the game, he argues to Eufemia that it does not matter who wins, "blancos o negros", because "irán luego confundidos a la misma caja para recomenzar otra vez, y otra. ¿Y la utilidad final? ¡Divertirnos, matar el tiempo!" (160). Franco notes that "la alegoría del ajedrez está arraigada en la tradición de las letras hispánicas", recalling chapter XII of the second book of the *Quijote* and, basing himself in part on its symbolism there, concludes that the symbolism of chess in *La esfinge* is "una prefiguración del concepto unamuniano de la vida como representación" (74). This is not a contradiction of the claim that the chess game symbolizes the futility of life; the idea that the world is a stage and the meaninglessness of existence go hand in hand.

Given the apparent futility of existence, Ángel argues that the "glory" of continuing the revolutionary cause of which he is an admired leader would not provide his life with any final meaning. In an argument with his wife immediately following the chess game he claims "¡Gloria, gloria! Nuestros oídos taponados de la tierra, y vueltos

tierra ellos mismos, no oirán lo que de nosotros se diga" (161). In scene IX of the second act, Ángel asks his friends, who have come to dissuade him from abandoning the cause, "¿Cómo puede ser mía la gloria cuando yo no exista? ¡Sin mí no hay mío!" (192). In the face of mortality, glory is an "indestructible aspiración a la eternidad", a "sombra de eternidad" (192). Eufemia pushes Ángel to seek glory for his sake, and it seems in order to achieve her own fame as well. But Ángel's doctor—as well as Eufemia's former boyfriend—Eusebio, warns her that "[q]uieres llenar el vacío de su alma tupiéndolo de gloria. Ese vacío no se llena así" (148). Only moments later, Ángel argues the same thing:

> EUFEMIA. Sólo con una causa grande y noble llenarás el vacío que sientes.
>
> ÁNGEL. ¡Crecerá más!
>
> EUFEMIA. ¡No!
>
> ÁNGEL. Es eso como el mar, que cuánto más de él se bebe, da más sed. (151)

Their marriage is infertile, and it is implied that Eufemia is driven towards glory as a replacement for the fulfillment that children would bring her. Frustrated maternal aspirations in women are a recurring theme in Unamuno's drama, appearing in six of his eleven dramas; we see examples of it here and in *La venda, Fedra*, *Soledad, Raquel encadenada* and *El otro*. Having children and the desire for glory are linked in *La Esfinge*; both represent an attempt to achieve immortality. In the fourth scene of the first act, Eufemia tries to convince Ángel that they are better off without children; "nos deja libres para obra más grande que la de fundar una familia" (151). Not long after, in scene

VIII, when the couple is speaking "de alma a alma" as Ángel suggests, he almost cruelly—physically forcing her to sit and listen to him—accuses her of seeking his glory only because he was unable to give her children. "Sé que ya que no te perpetúes en hjos de la carne, quieres dejar tu nombre unido a un nombre imperecedero ... ¡Como no te he dado hijos, me pides gloria!" (162).

As we have seen, this drama clearly argues that glory is not a substitute for immortality in the afterlife. We must now consider the characteristics of the peace that Unamuno envisioned in the either/or of the contemplated title, *Gloria o paz*, as they are presented in this play. On the subject of peace, there appears to be a shift in Unamuno's thinking sometime after writing this play, before writing *Del sentimiento*. In his essays of 1912 and 1913, Unamuno claims, "no quiero poner paz entre mi corazón y mi cabeza, entre mi fe y mi razón" (168), because, as we saw in the previous chapter, Unamuno based the meaning of his existence on his unwillingness to be unfaithful to the knowledge of his mind, or to the desires of his heart. In even sharper contrast with this play, Unamuno's closing line of *Del sentimiento* is: "¡Y Dios no te dé paz y sí gloria!" It must be assumed that the "gloria" Unamuno speaks of here does not refer to the worldly fame that *La Esfinge* rejects as a substitute for immortality, for he makes the same argument—albeit while showing sympathy for the desire for fame, not surprisingly, given that Unamuno most certainly experienced such desire as well—in *Del sentimiento* (104). I would suppose that the "gloria" Unamuno refers to is one derived from the authenticity of not abandoning the struggle between head and heart; it seems connected to his claim in *Del sentimiento* that our job in life is both to make ourselves "insustituibles" (306), and, "si es la nada lo que nos está reservado, no hacer que esto sea una justicia" (293). What

is clear from this closing line is that Unamuno does not advocate the pursuit of inner peace; he prefers the vital struggle. The Unamuno of 1898, however, has not yet developed this argument so clearly, and his autobiographical protagonist expresses several times the desire for peace. His last dying words are "¡Paz!... ¡Paz!... ¡Paz!...", and the final words of the play come from the faithfully religious Felipe, "¡Dios le dé paz!" (220). However, provided that the existence of God is palpably in question in this play, the peace is far from assured, which bears consistency with the arguments of *Del sentimiento*. The peace of death could just as easily come from nothingness, which is portrayed in this drama and in his later essay as terrible. Therefore, while *La Esfinge* does not spell out as clearly the argument that the most vital existence is one that maintains the struggle between faith and doubt, the early ruminations of Unamuno on this subject are clear. Franco interprets Ángel's death as symbolizing a rebirth: "Es, para el autor, un morir simbólico para renacer a la esperanza de la fe" (69). However, as Unamuno shows in this work and elsewhere, a rebirth into the hope of faith is far from peaceful. For this reason, Ángel's death leads to a cycle of hope and doubt—the hope that death will bring an immortal peace and the doubt that there is anything after death—which we will see again at the end of *La venda* and *Fedra*.

Peace is also linked in this play to simple faith. As we have already seen, Ángel wishes to return to the simplicity and blind faith of his youth: "Quiero humillarme, ser como los sencillos, rezar como de niño, maquinalmente, por rutina" (163). In the scene following this mono-dialogue, scene X of the first act, Ángel admires the simplicity of his *criada*, Martina:

ÁNGEL. ¿Tienes miedo a morirte?

MARTINA. Pero ¡si no estoy enferma...!

ÁNGEL. ¿Y si te mueres?

MARTINA. Algún día será...

ÁNGEL. Y novio, ¿le tienes? ...

ÁNGEL. ¡Bueno! Ten novio, cásate con él, cría hijos para el cielo; vive siempre así, en paz y en gracia de Dios; reza como te enseñaron, sin pensar en lo que reces, y luego muérete naturalmente..., como se debe morir...

MARTINA. Cuando Dios quiera..., ¿qué remedio? (164-65)

In scenes I and II of the final act, Unamuno portrays simple faith through Felipe's children, who provoke in Ángel a flood of memories from his youth. In scene III, Unamuno associates peace with nature. Ángel remembers his upbringing in the country, and in particular, his teacher, don Pascual: "Su recuerdo encarna para mí el ámbito maternal de la pobre aldea en que meció mi niñez de mi alma. Su casa me inspiraba el mismo respeto que la iglesia; es más, me parecía una iglesia más íntima y más recogida" (204). In this scene Unamuno evokes sensual imagery, which is associated with the peace of blind faith; Ángel recalls the smell of incense "con que don Pascual sahumaba su hogar" (204) as well as the music of his clavichord. "[E]n aquellos ecos que parecían purificar el ámbito y que, casados al perfume del incienso, me hacían ver en aquel hogar casto la concentración viva de los tranquilos siglos de mi aldea..." (204-5). D. L. Shaw, in his study on the symbolism and imagery of this work, shows the extensive use of music, water, and childhood imagery as symbols of peace and simple faith in this play. One of the most important uses of music occurs in scene X of the second act when, after

learning that his wife has left him, Ángel is about to shoot himself and he hears his neighbor play *Pietà Signore* on the piano, which stops him (197). Shaw argues that "[t]he basic melodrama of the scene is attenuated for the alert reader (though one suspects not perhaps for a possible spectator) by his recognition of the emphasis laid on the music's symbolic meaning", which is, "a spiritual peace too deep for expression in words" (89). The final use of music as a symbol of peace in this play is the *canto de cuna*, which Ángel requests his wife sing him as he dies.

As we saw in *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno also seems to regard the greatest example of inauthenticity in *La Esfinge* as coming from indifference to mortality or claiming that a mortal existence can still have meaning, more so than from failing to recognize the rational shortcomings of blind faith. Teodoro, a revolutionary comrade of Ángel's, is represented as the aesthete of the group, interested in the revolution and in Ángel for his eloquent speeches that the cause inspires. In the opening scene of the play, when Ángel laments that, in the end, everything they work for will be reduced to "aerolitos pelados", Teodoro exclaims, "¡Hermosa evocación! ¡Trágico de verdad!" (146). However, the stage directions tell us that he does not feel the weight of Ángel's words, because he has been listening and commenting distractedly: "*mientras hablaba* Ángel *estaba arreglándose la corbata al espejo*" (146). Likewise, Unamuno portrays the idea that we can give a mortal life meaning as insufficient for authenticity through the arguments of Ángel. In scene IX of the second act, Ángel's friends try to persuade him to return to the fight:

> JOAQUÍN. Hay que proponerse en la vida algún fin.
>
> ÁNGEL. ¿Para qué, si el universo no l[o] tiene?

JOAQUÍN. ¡Para dárselo!

As Ángel continues to argue the futility of the revolutionary struggle, Nicolás argues that Ángel must fight, "¡[p]or la verdad; por la belleza; por el bien!" (192), to which Ángel responds: "¡Verdad!... ¿Verdad de qué? ¿Qué belleza? ¿El bien de quién? Nunca os faltan nombres sonoros con que encubrir el vacío..." (193).

The idea of authenticity in *La Esfinge* is also connected to the problem of the self, of being who you truly are, and not as others perceive you, or as you may even perceive yourself. In the same scene that we have just discussed, when Joaquín accuses Ángel of being a traitor, he responds that, "¡[n]o quiero serlo a mi conciencia!" (193). Shortly thereafter, he asks "¿por qué he de ser como me queréis vosotros y no como yo me quiero?," contrasting the freedom of being who he wants to be with the freedom of his people (195). Summerhill argues that such a conflict of freedom is central in this play: "At its most basic level, then, the action of *La Esfinge* centers on a conflict between individual and collective freedom" (229). Ángel's former pursuit of glory is clearly one example in which who Ángel "really" is has differed from how he perceived himself. In scene III of the final act, Ángel reveals to Felipe another example of this betrayal of the self: he has pretended to be crazy. "¿Por qué crees que lo hacía, Felipe? Por intrigar al prójimo; por hacerme el interesante; por aquello de que la locura y el genio..., ¡qué sé yo por qué!" (207). The confrontation between who we really are and who we perceive ourselves to be—that is, the "other" within ourselves—is dramatized best in the much discussed mirror scene, which will be echoed later in *El otro*, and which Franco calls "uno de los momentos más logrados de todo el teatro unamuniano" (74). García Blanco links this scene to an experience that Unamuno describes in "Días de limpieza", which

appeared in *La Nación* of Buenos Aires on November 24, 1913: "La sensación , sensación que puede llegar a ser pavorosa, que yo he experimentado alguna vez, es la de quedarme un rato a solas mirándome a un espejo y acabar por verme como otro, como un extraño" (12). In scene XIII of the first act, Ángel passes in front of a mirror and "*vislumbra de pronto su propia imagen como una sombra extraña y se detiene ante ella sobrecogido*" (170). He asks himself, "¿Sombra?... ¡No!... ¡No!... ¡Vivo!... ¡Vivo!" and then, "[*d*]*e pronto, sintiendo una violenta palpitación, lanza un gemido y se lleva la mano al pecho*" (170). We must imagine that Ángel has felt the Unamunian fear at viewing himself as an other, a stranger that does not represent who he feels himself to be.

The final theme of *La Esfinge* that merits discussion here is related to the conflict between the self and the other: the *egoísmo*, or self-centeredness implied in the obsession with one's own mortality. Much as González-del-Valle will argue that Fedra's main fault is *egoísmo* (43), Ángel is also plagued by his self-centeredness. This view is widely shared. For example, Franco argues that Ángel, above all, suffers "una radical egolatría" (66). Summerhill makes the same argument (230). Unamuno certainly intended for his self-centeredness and arrogance to be seen as Ángel's main fault; Ángel recognizes this himself on several occasions. For example, as Ángel dies, he admits to his friends, "[h]e querido hacer de vosotros, mis amigos, un comentario a mí: vosotros satélites, y el astro yo...; no he querido que os manifestarais... Y también vosotros tenéis vuestra alma, tan alma como la mía" (218). He undergoes a similar recognition earlier, when Eufemia leaves him: "¡Su problema! Luego ella también lo tiene... ¡Sí, tiene su alma como yo!" (195). However, it takes her leaving for him to recognize this. Eufemia exposes his inability to recognize her as an equal long before she abandons him. After their heated

discussion following the chess game she shouts at him as she walks out, "¡Eufemia no es una pieza de ajedrez!" (163), and later, she even more clearly confesses in a Kantian tone: "Hace tiempo que me he convencido de que me tomas no de fin, sino de medio, como tú dirías. Para ti no hay más fin que tú mismo ... todo lo que sufres es un inmenso orgullo masculino, un egoísmo monstruoso" (174). As he dies, Ángel concludes that his death is deserved, "es el pago merecido a mi soberbia" (220). In the previous scene, as Ángel confronts the crowd, he shouts to them, "no debo callarme porque soy palabra", echoing the Biblical idea that God is the Word (214). Franco, analyzing Ángel's reference to his "satánica soberbia" (207), suggests that Unamuno chose the name Ángel for its correlation with Satan as the angel fallen for having tried to equal God (66). This indeed seems corroborated by the text, where there are too many references to Ángel's *soberbia* and *egoísmo*, by his friends as well as by himself, to mention here.

As the analysis thus far has suggested, there are many Aristotelian elements of tragedy in this play. In the first place, *La Esfinge* follows the Aristotelian tragic plot, which shows the movement of the protagonist, through some error, from a state of fortune to one of misfortune. At the beginning of the play Ángel is lauded by his friends for his inspiring revolutionary speech and, in the end, he is shot and killed by his very followers. However, the tragic plot is somewhat compromised here, given that Ángel chose to remove himself from his position of glory. Another Aristotelian element in this play, which Franco suggests, is that Ángel's friends serve the role of a chorus by raising questions about Ángel's motives as well as for foreseeing his downfall (71). Following another Aristotelian element of tragedy, as we have just seen, Ángel undergoes a recognition, or *anagnorisis*, of his error, which is his self-centeredness and arrogance.

This error does indeed lead to his assassination. While his followers are angry with him, he is not killed until he tells them, "no callaré mientras tenga vida en el pecho...; ... callarme es morir, y no quiero morirme, no moriré...," followed by the final provocation: "Sois unos cobardes" (214). On the subject of recognition, however, we can see two tragic tales at play in *La Esfinge*. There is the tragedy of Ángel's death, which is what this paragraph has been discussing thus far. But there is also the larger existential tragedy of the apparent futility of existence and the nothingness of death. For this second, more universal tragedy, Ángel undergoes his *anagnorisis* at the play's beginning, and as we have already discussed, this tragedy is not provoked by any human error. It is rather the backdrop against which Ángel's personal tragedy plays out, thereby making the spectator, hopefully, aware of the larger tragedy at hand.

Summerhill argues that, "Unamuno chose an essentially realistic or verisimilar mode of representation in which the sublime is conveyed symbolically" (237-38). However, there are times when the language is so symbolic and abstract that the reader/spectator could start to see the action as unrealistic. For example, as Ángel dies, he asks "¿Qué quiere decir la muerte?" and Joaquín replies, "¡Vida!" (217). Similarly, to Ángel's following question, "¿Qué quiere decir la vida?", Felipe answers, "¡Muerte!" (217). Here Unamuno is obviously playing with ideas, which results in a death scene unlike most could imagine witnessing in their own lives. It is hard to conceive of telling a dying man that life is death. This occasional lack of verisimilitude, however, does not create a huge obstacle to the accessibility of this tragedy. A larger obstacle is created by Ángel's somewhat unlikable personality. In the first chapter we discussed how Aristotle insists that the protagonist be admirable (*Poetics* 1454b8-13). But Ángel, who exhibits a

growing awareness of his self-centeredness and inability to look at other people as ends in themselves, does not change his actions as a result. Tía Ramona, the sister of Eufemia's deceased mother, seems to summarize the problem of Ángel's personality best. Eufemia tells her that Ángel, "[e]s brusco, pero, en el fondo, cariñoso", to which she responds, "[t]an en el fondo que es como si no lo fuese... En el fondo todos somos buenos" (171). Ángel argues at the beginning of the play that "la absoluta sinceridad acabaría con todas las rencillas y reconcomios. Si nos viésemos todos desnudas las almas, fundiríase en amor una inmensa compasión mutua" (149). However, Ángel, throughout the play, seems concerned only with other people understanding *his* soul. After he abandons the revolution, Nicolás expresses a legitimate concern: "Y así nos dejas, a tus amigos; en la estacada..., a merced de Moreno [the opposition leader about whom we know very little] y de su gente..." (194). But Ángel concludes that his friends simply want to use him for their own protection, failing to recognize that his actions put his friends in this position. He responds to Nicolás: "Tengo que atender a mi salud. ¡Buscaos la vida!" (194).

Aristotle insists that the protagonist be admirable because the audience is likely to feel the most fear and pity for a character that they like, can relate to, and even look up to. For Ángel's *egoísmo* and *soberbia*, as well as for the questionable sincerity of his recognition of these faults, the reader may not fully experience the tragic emotions throughout the play, and therefore, may not undergo a catharsis of these emotions. Seeing as this is the ultimate goal of tragedy according to Aristotle (*Poetics* 6, 1449b24-28), the compromising of the tragic emotions by Ángel's less-than-admirable personality makes *La Esfinge* a weaker tragedy. For this reason, Doménech's claim (115) that those

who share Unamuno's tragic sense of life enjoy his tragedy more is perfectly applicable to *La Esfinge*. For those deeply and personally burdened by the problem of immortality and of the futility of existence, Ángel's self-centeredness would be more easily explained and therefore forgiven. But for those who do not understand or feel with a similar intensity his crisis, his behavior would seem more like cruel indifference towards his wife, friends and followers in the revolution, and therefore his death would be seem less pitiable and fearful.

***La venda: Drama en un acto y dos cuadros* (1899)**

Unamuno had barely finished *La Esfinge* when he gave notice of his efforts towards his second drama, originally referred to as *La ciega* (*O. C.* V, 43). This drama, which shares its plot with a short story written simultaneously under the same title, *La venda*, is just one act in length. As we mentioned earlier, this play is in many ways unique in Unamuno's dramatic production for its thematic simplicity, which is portrayed through allegory. The play opens with a discussion between don Pablo and don Juan, in which they argue the merits of a life based on the pursuit of knowledge versus one based on the pursuit of faith. They are interrupted by María's appearance in the street; she is disoriented and distressed with the news of her father's impending death. She states that she cannot find her way to her father's house and asks to borrow a cane. She accepts don Juan's cane, blindfolds herself, and continues on her way, now sure-footed. The two men learn from a villager, Eugenia, that María is blind. María's *criada* then enters the street and explains that María's blindness has recently been cured, shortly after giving birth to her first son, and that her doctor ordered her not to leave the house. When María learned

of her father's state, she insisted on going to him and the *criada* was unable to detain her. In the next scene, we are introduced to María's sister, Marta, María's husband, José, and her father. Marta and José try to convince the father that his health is improving, but he does not believe them. When María enters the house, her father begs her to remove the blindfold so that she may see him before he dies, but María objects, insisting: "Te conozco padre, te conozco; te veo, te veo muy bien, te veo con el corazón" (239). The *criada* appears with María's baby, whom she holds before her father. Then, tired of the father's repeated pleas met with María's refusal, Marta rips the blindfold off, and the father, overwhelmed with the emotion, promptly dies. María begs for the blindfold again and claims "¡No quiero volver a ver!" (244).

La venda deals almost exclusively with one Unamunian concept: that the pursuit of reason destroys one's faith. In this play, as Franco notes, with the exception of the *criada* and Eugenia, every character is a symbol or a personified Unamunian idea (87). María and don Juan symbolize the position of faith, while their complementary counterparts, don Pedro and Marta, symbolize the position of reason. The father, clearly, symbolizes God. In addition, perhaps as a result of Unamuno's desire to return theater to its religious origins, this play maintains strong Biblical connections. Franco quite convincingly shows that the names of every main character correspond to Biblical figures, as we will see in the analysis that follows. The ideas portrayed in this drama also have a foundation in several Biblical concepts: primarily, the concept that he who sees the face of God dies, which is expressed most clearly in Exodus, XXXIII, 20; "And He

said, thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live."[17] My study of *La venda* will analyze the symbolism of the characters and their actions in order to consider the tragic nature of this play, taking into account Unamuno's dramatic technique in its conclusion about the extent to which we can call *La venda* a tragedy.

In this drama, according to Franco, "[e]l conflicto razón-fe se expresa en dos planos: en el abstracto, don Pedro y don Juan; en el real y concreto, Marta y María" (91). Indeed, the opening dialogue between don Pedro and don Juan, which did not appear in the short story (Paucker 309), serves as an explanation of the events that are to follow. Consider this exchange between the two:

> DON JUAN. La fe, la fe es la que nos da vida; por la fe vivimos, la fe nos da el sentido de la vida, ¡nos da a Dios!
>
> DON PEDRO. Se vive por la razón, amigo Juan; la razón nos revela el secreto del mundo, la razón nos hace obrar... (224)

Through these two figures, Unamuno first presents in 1899 many concepts regarding the nature of the conflict between faith and reason that he would continue to argue through the rest of his literary career. The opening line of the play comes from don Pedro: "¡Pues lo dicho, no, nada de ilusiones! Al pueblo debemos darle siempre la verdad, toda la verdad, la pura verdad, y sea luego lo que fuere" (223). Recognizing the *anti-vital* nature of the "truth", don Juan protests: "¿Y si la verdad le mata y la ilusión le vivifica?" (223). This argument is reflected more than thirty years later in a conversation

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[17] Of the relatively few studies on this drama, María Palomo Pilar's study most extensively explores the Biblical passages that seem to have influenced Unamuno when he wrote this drama. This analysis will not explore all of them, as there are many, but will instead only highlight a few that seem most pertinent to the tragic theme of *La venda*.

between Lázaro and don Manuel in Unamuno's last novel, *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* (1932). Lázaro says, "Pero, don Manuel, la verdad, la verdad ante todo", to which don Manuel replies: "¿La verdad? La verdad, Lázaro, es acaso algo terrible, algo intolerable, algo mortal; la gente sencilla no podría vivir con ella" (23). Shortly after these views are expressed in *La venda,* don Pedro asks, "¿Para qué se nos dió la razón?", and don Juan replies: "Tal vez para luchar contra ella y así merecer la vida" (224). Unamuno suggests as much in *Del sentimiento* when he states that, "[H]ay que creer en esa otra vida para poder vivir ésta y soportarla ... hay que creer acaso en esa otra vida para merecerla, para conseguirla" (293). The implication in *Del sentmiento,* however, has progressed; Unamuno suggests that not only will one be worthy of this life for struggling against reason but that one will also be worthy of the after-life, should one exist.

Franco considers the possibility that Unamuno chose the names Pedro and Juan as an allusion to the Apostles. Regarding don Juan, Franco tells us the following: "De todos los Apóstoles, Juan es el predilecto de Cristo, el discípulo amado. Juan es todo amor y confianza en el Maestro. Es natural, por tanto, que se preste a ser el símbolo de la fe" (89). The fact that Peter was also a believer, however, makes his representing reason over religious faith in *La venda* somewhat puzzling. Franco's analysis suggests that don Pedro, as more than a representation of complete skepticism, is a representation of those who want to rationalize their faith, a desire that Unamuno sharply criticized in the Catholic church.[18] "Los Evangelios nos revelan que la fe de Pedro a veces flaquea. ... No

[18] This is a recurring theme in Unamuno's work, particularly in *Del sentimiento* and *La agonía del cristianismo*. Franco offers a good summary of this view through a letter written to Francisco Grandmontagne by Unamuno in which he refers to "el espíritu evangélico, libre de dogmatismos teológicos (en que el catolicismo le ha aherrojado)"

es que Pedro no crea; cree, pero su fe requiere un apoyo en lo "real", en lo que la razón le muestra como plausible", thus revealing "la actitud negativa de Unamuno con respecto a la herencia escolástica (racionalista) del catolicismo" (89). Indeed, while don Pedro's position is firmly presented on the side of reason, there are a few subtle signs in the text that imply his skepticism has not gone so far as to make him an atheist or a complete nihilist. In one instance, as we just saw, don Pedro asks, "¿Para qué se nos dió la razón, dime?" (224). The fact that Unamuno uses the verb "dar"—albeit in the passive, "se nos dió"—implies that reason is a gift. While the phrasing is quite common, Unamuno could have easily had him ask, for example, ¿para qué *tenemos* la razón?, in which case the implication would be slightly different. Don Pedro also argues that, "la razón nos revela el secreto del mundo" (224), thus implying he believes there exists such a "secret of the world", or a deeper meaning to existence. The difference is that he believes reason, and not faith, will lead us to it. Finally, when he first encounters her, don Pedro refers to María as "mujer de Dios" (225). Once again, the phrasing is common and does not imply a firm belief in God *per se*, however, we should not consider any of the dialogue in such a short work, with a theme so close to Unamuno's heart, as accidental.

As we recall from *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno argues that reason cannot divorce itself completely from faith, nor can faith from reason. "[F]e, vida y razón se necesitan mutuamente ... Una tradición puramente racionalista es tan imposible como una tradición puramente religiosa" (161). We have seen that don Pedro relies, in part, on a language influenced by positions of faith; don Juan also shows that his adherence to the position of

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(85). The date of the letter appears to be unknown, however it was printed in *El Tiempo* of Buenos Aires on March 11, 1921.

faith is not entirely independent from reason. Just as don Juan is about to hand over his cane to María, the two symbols of faith have the following exchange:

> DON JUAN. Pero antes, explíquese.
>
> MARÍA. *(Tomando el bastón)* Dejémonos de explicaciones, que se muere mi padre. (225)

Then, after the two visitors have learned of María's recently cured blindness, don Juan shows again his need for rational explanations: "Mira, mira lo de la venda; ahora me lo explico" (228). Unamuno argues in *Del sentimiento* that we, as rational animals, are unable to avoid such rational explanations: "Lo que hay es que el hombre, prisionero de la lógica, sin la cual no piensa, ha querido siempre ponerla al servicio de sus anhelos" (141). Don Juan is doing precisely this—using reason to serve his advocacy for religious faith—as he continues his rationalization of María's behavior: "Se encontró en un mundo que no conocía de vista. Para ir a su padre no sabía otro camino que el de las tinieblas. ¡Qué razón tenía al decir que se vendaba los ojos para mejor ver el camino! Y ahora volvamos a lo de la ilusión y la verdad pura, a lo de la razón y la fe" (228). Considering the similarity of don Juan's language to Unamuno's in *Del sentimiento*—where Unamuno admits that "necesitamos de la lógica, de este poder terrible, para transmitir pensamientos y percepciones" (141)—in addition to the role of don Juan and don Pedro as *explaining* the significance of the events that are to follow, it is inevitable that don Juan would use rational language to do so.

In contrast, María's "dejémonos de explicaciones" reveals her symbolization of *true* blind faith, in contrast to don Juan as the *explanation* for blind faith. María does not express her rational thoughts, but rather her feelings. Franco contrasts the way Marta and

Juan try to convince the father that he is getting better by lying with María's manner of denying her father's death. This is revealed in the following conversation between Marta and José in the father's presence:

> JOSÉ. *(Tomándole el pulso.)* Hoy está mejor el pulso, parece.
>
> MARTA. *(A* José, *aparte.)* Así; hay que engañarle.
>
> JOSÉ. Sí, que se muera sin saberlo.
>
> MARTA. Lo cual no es morir. (235)

María, on the other hand, when confronted with her father's impending death, expresses only the will of her heart, which Franco describes as "la protesta irracional del sentimiento (93): "¡Pues yo no quiero que te mueras, padre!" (238). In the first scene, when María is asked why she has blindfolded herself, she responds, "para mejor ver el camino" (225). Pilar Palomo shows that in this manner Unamuno represents María as a true Biblical symbol of faith (67), linking her response with *II Corinthians*, V, 4: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." When don Pedro responds to María, "¿Para mejor ver el camino taparse los ojos? ¡Pues no lo comprendo!", María claims: "¡Usted no, pero yo sí!", thus revealing the irrationality and incommunicability of faith.

Marta, however, cannot escape the worldly and the rational. Franco reminds us of the Biblical basis for the names of the two sisters, coming from *Luke* X, 38-42, which he summarizes in the following manner: "Marta representa la vida activa; María la vida contemplativa. Ello proviene de que mientras la primera se entregaba a los quehaceres domésticos, la segunda, sentada a los pies del Señor, escuchaba sus palabras" (91-92). Unamuno lets the reader know that Marta is the practical sister who has kept the house

running. The father reproaches Marta for always being "la juiciosa", at which point María comes to her sister's defense:

> No la reprendas, padre. Marta es muy buena. Sin ella, ¿qué hubiéramos hecho nosotros? ¿Vivir de besos? Ven, hermana, ven. (Marta *se acerca, y las dos hermanas se abrazan y besan.*) Tú, Marta, naciste con vista; has gozado siempre de la luz. Pero, déjame a mí, que no tuve otro consuelo que las caricias de mi padre. (240)

In an earlier scene, Unamuno shows the same tendency towards the practical in Marta through her response to her father's worry that her husband, who is away at work, may not see him before he dies: "¿Qué le vamos a hacer?... Está ganándose nuestro pan" (232). Marta, like so many Unamunian female characters, is without children. Her infertility is exposed in the conversation that follows the previous quotation:

> EL PADRE. ¡Y no puedes decir el pan de nuestros hijos, Marta!
>
> MARTA. ¿Es un reproche, padre?
>
> EL PADRE. ¿Un reproche? No..., no..., no...
>
> MARTA. Sí; con frecuencia habla de un modo que parece como si me inculpara nuestra falta de hijos... Y acaso debería regocijarse por ello...
>
> EL PADRE. ¿Regocijarme? ¿Por qué, por qué, Marta?...
>
> MARTA. Porque así puedo yo atenderle mejor.
>
> EL PADRE. Vamos, sí, que yo, tu padre, hago para ti las veces de hijo...

Unamuno reveals the sterility of Marta´s marriage at the same time that he portrays her almost cold practicality, in addition to her treating her father as a child. Franco quite

rightly interprets her infertility as a necessary consequence of her practical sense of life: "María es la verdadera madre: sólo la fe puede ser fecunda; la razón es estéril" (92).

Just as Unamuno showed through don Pedro and don Juan, inseparable adversaries, that faith and reason need each other, Marta and María also serve as a representation of the co-dependence of faith and reason. We saw earlier María's defense of and compassion for her sister, at which point they hug and kiss. Shortly after, the two sisters continue to bicker, and they hug again. José claims that they are always fighting and Marta responds: "¡Es claro! Es nuestra manera de querernos..." (241). Franco interprets this hug in the following manner: "Este abrazo simbólico es la base del sentimiento trágico de la vida" (93). Indeed, Unamuno argues in *Del sentimiento* that, "en el fondo del abismo se encuentran la desesperación sentimental y volitiva y el escepticismo racional frente a frente, y se abrazan como hermanos... un abrazo trágico" (156). This embrace is tragic because reason will eventually destroy religious faith, a process that Unamuno represents symbolically in this play. Immediately following their second hug, Marta, referring to the blindfold, begs, "[p]ero quítate eso, por Dios" (241). It is Marta, exasperated by the continued pleas of the father, who rips off the blindfold, exclaiming to María: "¡Ahí tienes a nuestro padre, hermana!" (244). In doing so, Marta forces María to look at the father in the light of reason, who will in turn die as a result. When José protests to Marta, "[e]stuviste algo brutal...", Marta argues, "¡Hay que ser así con ella!" (244). As the representation of reason, Marta can find no other way to confront her sister, the symbol of faith. While her actions are not malicious—she very reasonably argues, "¡Hay que dar ese consuelo al padre!" (244)—they lead to the irrevocable loss of faith.

The death of the father clearly symbolizes the loss of God for one who, like Unamuno, once had faith and then lost it through reason. Summerhill recognizes the problematic nature of attempting to symbolize an ineffable, all-powerful entity. "María's father ... does not adequately convey the idea of God, who exceeds representation. In the end, the only way to speak the unspeakable is to say that it cannot be spoken" (238). However, it seems that through the father, Unamuno is representing his concept of a subjective, *interior* God, more so than an objective God, which would be the same for everyone. The fact that every other character in the play can see the father reinforces the idea that he, who is for others an ordinary man, symbolizes María's *personal* God, created through her faith; the others, who have always seen, never enjoyed blind faith. A striking indication that the father symbolizes a personal God for María is that, while Marta and José address the father with the formal *usted*, María uses the informal and more intimate, *tú*, which is customary when speaking to God in prayer. When analyzing María's response to her father, who questioned why she had such pretty eyes if they could not see—"Para que tú, padre, te vieras en ellos; para ser tu espejo, un espejo vivo" (242)—Pilar Palomo concludes the same, that María as a living mirror of the father symbolizes an internal, created God (69). Unamuno's fascination with the Biblical idea that he who sees the face of God dies is represented here with a change, which naturally follows if we are to interpret the father as a symbol of a subjective, personal God. Franco explains that "[c]uando se ve contemplado en los ojos de María, ahora invadidos por la luz de la razón, él es el que se muere" (94). Don Juan warns the spectator at the beginning of the play of the action that is to follow, alluding to the same Biblical passage: "Tal vez nos sucede con la verdad lo que, según las Sagradas Letras, nos sucede con

Dios, y es que quien le ve se muere..." (224). If we recall that faith in God was most important to Unamuno for the promise of immortality, it is understandable that the death of the father, caused by María's seeing the face of "the truth", signifies her own death as well. Finally, it is important to note that the death of the father represents the irreversible nature of the loss of blind faith. It is, as Juan Barco states in a letter from August 15, 1899, "como la virginidad que no se recobra" (*O. C.* V, 43).

As the previous chapter argued, Unamuno shows in this play a remarkable similarity to Kierkegaard, which helps to elucidate the overwhelming *hermandad* that Unamuno felt with the Danish thinker when he discovered him just one year after completing this play. As we have already seen, *La venda* represents the Kierkegaardian idea that a confrontation with the rational absurdity of faith makes such faith all but impossible, as well as the concept of the subjective nature of truth, or that faith creates its object. We also see in this play the Kierkegaardian theme of madness, that she who acts out of faith cannot explain herself rationally to others. When María responds to don Pedro's incomprehension that he may not understand her actions, but that she does, don Pedro claims: "Parece loca" (225). These similarities with Kierkegaard pose the question: does *La venda*, then, represent the kind of faith that Abraham has in *Fear and Trembling* as the only "true" faith? Kierkegaard represents the loss of blind faith, for its recognition of the rational absurdity of faith, as positive. *La venda*, on the other hand, seems to portray this loss as negative, indeed tragic. However, Franco sees a possible symbol of hope for the restoration of faith in *La venda*. He argues that God has died, "pero queda el niño, el hijo de María y José. Él, el Cristo histórico del Evangelio, se convertirá para Unamuno en el símbolo vivo de nuestra esperanza en la salvación" (95).

Once again, it is hard to imagine that the names of the parents, María and José, would be accidental. It is therefore worthwhile to explore Franco's suggestion that the baby is a symbol of Jesus and a source of hope at the end of the tragedy. Franco makes reference, albeit not in connection with the baby as a symbol of Jesus, to the curing of the blind in the New Testament, and in particular to *John* IX, 39: "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." Franco interprets the importance of this passage as follows: "[H]ace una separación entre los que aceptan la luz de la fe y los que piensan que ven y perseveren en su incredulidad" (90). If Unamuno held, as Kierkegaard did, that in order to have true faith one must first recognize the rational absurdity, thereby abandoning their blind faith, then María's gaining sight would be a necessary step on the path to true faith. It is noteworthy that Unamuno has María cured at precisely the same time that her son is born; "apenas se repuso del parto cuando le dieron vista" (229), thus implying an even more direct connection to Jesus' role as the curer of the blind than Franco suggests. In addition, María is not represented as someone who completely rejects reason, which is apparent in the mutual need she shares with her sister, as well as in her seemingly brave statement: "Sí, sé que se está muriendo. No trates de engañarme. ... No temo a la verdad" (237). Unamuno will argue later in *Del sentimiento* that the symbolic hug between faith and reason is indeed a source of hope for true faith. "[D]e este abrazo entre la desesperación y el esceptisismo, nace la santa, la dulce, la salvadora incertidumbre, nuestro supremo consuelo" (167).[19] Finally, underlining the importance

[19] As we recall, Kierkegaard suggests that one who clings to an uncertainty with passion, *i.e.*, one who has faith, holds a greater truth than one who considers the problem abstractly ("Subjective Truth" 180).

of María's baby as a possible symbol of hope for achieving authentic faith in *La venda*, are the closing lines of the play. While María's words clearly express, above all, her deep sorrow at the death of her father, there is one distraction: the baby's crying. "¡Padre! ¡Padre!... No me oye... ni me ve... ¡Padre! ¡Hijo, voy, no llores!... ¡Padre! ¡La venda, la venda otra vez! ¡No quiero volver a ver!" (244). This reminder of the baby's presence in the final moments of the play distracts us momentarily from the tragedy of the father's death with a symbol of hope, which is in keeping with Unamuno's view in *Del sentimiento* that a recognition of the tragic sense of life leads to consolation and hope (108).

It is important to note, however, that while the baby is a symbol of Jesus and of hope, it is a relatively obscure symbol in this play. The hope that can spring from *el fondo del abismo* is not explained in the opening dialogue between don Juan and don Pedro as the other symbols of the play are. The much more apparent message of *La venda* is the irreversible loss of blind faith, symbolized through the death of the father. María begs for her blindfold, claiming she never wants to see again, even though it is clear that this is futile. It is also important to recognize that the baby is crying in the final moments of the play. The tears of the baby bring to mind Unamuno's fascination with the suffering Jesus, the historical figure to which Franco referred, as the ultimate tragic figure because, "no mereció por su inocencia haberse muerto" (*Del sentimiento* 303). In the final moments of *La Esfinge*, Ángel also refers to Jesus' undeserved death (220). This image of Christ as a tragic figure and the overarching dominance of the theme of the permanent loss of blind faith in *La venda* certainly taint the hope that the baby symbolizes. The paradoxical symbolism of the baby—of hope as well as of the tragedy

of death—leads to a cyclical movement between hope and doubt in *La venda*. While the baby symbolizes hope through the figure of Jesus, the play, as well as the tragedy of Jesus himself, encourages doubt. However, as the doubt leads us to *el fondo del abismo*, Unamuno tells us hope will return again. This cyclical struggle between hope and doubt is the struggle between the heart and the head that is, for Unamuno, the tragic sense of life. We will see in the next section that *Fedra* leads to a similar struggle. In addition, as we will see in the following two chapters, this cyclical struggle between hope and doubt lies at the core of Buero's tragedies.

In comparison with the short story, Paucker argues that the play, *La venda*, lacks the stark emotion—what Unamuno would later refer to as *desnudez trágica*—that the story enjoys. The scene with don Juan and don Pedro is unique to the drama. Marta and José do not appear in the short story either; in their place are María's brother and a priest. Paucker shows many instances where the meaning of the plot is explained in the drama, primarily through don Juan and don Pablo, whereas in the story it is not. "And it is this fact—that [Unamuno] develops ideas and conversations—that helps explain the diminished passion which is found in the drama" (309). However, as we will shortly see, only the symbolic story of *La venda* is tragic, and it is therefore understandable that Unamuno would wish to make sure that the meaning of the symbols would not be missed. Franco argues that "[a]caso porque se dio cuenta de que el significado del relato no estaba lo bastante claro, decidió incluir la escena de don Pedro y don Juan en el drama y desarrollar más el simbolismo, sirviéndose de la historia de Marta y María" (97). In Greek tragedy, the chorus often served as both an explanation and a forewarning of the

action to follow. Don Juan and don Pedro serve the same purpose, and in this sense, their presence does not diminish the tragic nature of the drama.

In consideration of the tragic nature of this play, it is necessary to distinguish between the two possible interpretations of the plot in *La venda,* the connotative and the denotative. The connotative or allegorical interpretation of this plot, where María as blind faith confronts reason and, as a result, loses her God, is of the greatest importance in this play, and it is tragic. By this interpretation, the plot of *La venda* shows the downfall of its hero, however not necessarily due to an error. We could consider having pursued reason in the first place, having tried, like don Pedro, to rationalize faith an error. However, Unamuno portrays such a pursuit as an inevitable consequence of being a rational creature, and so it is not an error in the same sense that Ángel's egotism in *La Esfinge* is. As we recall, Aristotle preferred tragedies where the downfall was the result of an error, but there are examples of tragedies in Ancient Greece, such as *Antigone*, in which the downfall occurs without an error committed by the hero. Therefore, as we said in the first chapter, the lack of an error in itself does not necessarily make a tale un-tragic. It simply makes it less preferable to Aristotle. The entire play represents the process of the *anagnorisis,* culminating with the death of María's God, and the final realization that reason has destroyed blind faith. Whether or not María responds admirably to this recognition and to her downfall is also somewhat questionable. Like Unamuno, she wishes to restore blind faith and, in doing so, bring back the father. However, all the spectator is allowed to witness of María's response is her lament, and her call to the baby. If we maintain Franco's view that the baby is a symbol of hope for achieving a more authentic faith, then her call to the baby would indeed be admirable. We must recall that

Aristotle wants the hero to respond admirably to the downfall so that the hero may be more likeable and understandable, which allows for greater arousal of fear and pity in the spectator. Without a doubt, María is more likeable than other Unamunian protagonists, such as Ángel. However, María is a symbol, and as a symbol, like so many Unamunian characters, she represents only one idea, which deprives her of the depth and complexity of human nature. As we have argued before, it is much more difficult for a spectator to feel fear and pity for an idea alone.

The arousal of fear and pity in *La venda* is further compromised by the fact that the story of María and her father's death, when we set the symbolism aside, is not tragic. It is noteworthy that Unamuno did not include the priest in the drama. In the story, the priest reminds María of her good fortune in having gained sight at the moment of her father's death: "Dios es misericordioso, hija mía; ha permitido que pueda usted ver a su padre antes de que se muera..." (qtd. in Franco 97).[20] The omission of this reminder in the drama shows again Unamuno's desire for the focus to be on the symbolic tragedy. It would be quite reasonable for a spectator to agree with the priest and feel that María is fortunate. Blind her entire life, she is miraculously cured and will be able to enjoy seeing her baby and husband, and she was able to see her father before he died. María seeing the father can only be viewed as the cause of his death symbolically. In the concrete, seeing her father did precipitate his death by causing him such emotion, but it is well established in the play that he is about to die, whether María sees him or not. Therefore, the concrete, non-symbolic death of the father is sad, but it is not tragic. Given that the spectator can only access the symbolic tragedy through a dramatic situation that in more

[20] This quote is taken here from *Obras Completas* IX, 158.

direct, mimetic terms is not tragic, the arousal of fear and pity could be greatly diminished if the spectator were too distracted by the un-tragic, denotative meaning of the tale. Summerhill argues that in *La venda*, "the message [that reason destroys faith and therefore, God] is conveyed in such an artificial manner that it fails to provide a convincing solution and can stand only as an opinion" (238). Once again, it seems that Doménech's claim that those who share Unamuno's tragic sense of life enjoy his theater more rings true. A spectator that has struggled with the conflict between reason and faith could latch onto the symbolism of *La venda* wholeheartedly and, viewing the death of the father as the loss of God and immortality, would feel great sadness witnessing his death. For a spectator that does not feel this struggle intimately, however, *La venda* would seem more like an argument, a development of ideas, or as Summerhill suggests, an opinion.

***Fedra: Tragedia en tres actos* (1911)**

Fedra, written twelve years after *La venda*, shows marked improvement for Unamuno as a dramatist, even while his favorite themes have changed little. It is important to keep in mind that Unamuno's endeavor to modernize this classic tragedy occurs at the same time that he was working on *Del sentimiento*, which undoubtedly leads to a similarity in themes between the two works. Nelson Orringer, who discovered two earlier drafts of Unamuno's *Fedra*, tells us that he was wrapping up his final draft in 1911, "while correcting the proofs of the first chapter of *Del sentimiento*" (549). For this reason, Orringer concludes: "*Del sentimiento trágico* was to contain the theory; *Fedra*, the practice and a concrete illustration of the doctrine" (550). Much as the first chapter of Unamuno's great philosophical work deals primarily with the *hombre de carne y hueso*,

he is most concerned with portraying the same through *Fedra*. In a letter written to Juan Arzadun shortly after finishing his final draft, Unamuno states that his *Fedra* is, "[e]n prosa muy enjuta, sin trajes, sin decorado, sin nada más que tres almas al desnudo" (*O. C.* V, 59). In his *Exordio* to this work, written seven years later, Unamuno explains his "naked tragedy", which serves above all to bare to the public a true, human soul. "[P]rocuro, en vez de cortar papeles, crear personajes—o más bien, personas, caracteres" (301). Unamuno also tells the reader that his *Fedra* is based on those of Euripides and Racine, only modernized (302). While he does not mention Seneca, both Orringer (553) and Valbuena-Briones (88) conclude that Unamuno was most likely influenced by his *Fedra* as well. Valbuena-Briones suggests that Unamuno did not mention Seneca because "el estilo ampuloso y moralizante del latino no estaba de moda" (88). This analysis will focus on the tragic themes and dramatic technique of *Fedra*. We will not separately analyze two areas of study that this drama prompts: the influence of Euripides, Seneca and Racine on Unamuno's *Fedra*, and the "naked tragedy" that Unamuno defines in his *Exordio*.[21] Rather, this analysis will mention the most pertinent elements of both topics as they become relevant to the larger theme of *Fedra*'s standing as an example of modern Spanish tragedy.

Unamuno's Fedra, like those preceding her, is afflicted with an uncontrollable passion for her stepson, Hipólito, who is closer in age to her than her husband. The play's action begins *in media res*. Unamuno's *Fedra* is unique from all previous versions

[21] For an excellent study on the influence of earlier writers on Unamuno's *Fedra*, Orringer's article stands out. Valbuena-Briones also has two articles discussing the importance of Seneca's influence, and Rodríguez Ramírez outlines the differences in plot between the various versions of this tale as well. "Naked tragedy", as we recall, was discussed in the opening section of this chapter on Unamuno's theater.

in that his characters belong to the bourgeoisie, and for this reason Fedra's husband, instead of the king Theseus, is the common man Pedro. This *Fedra* is also unique in that the marriage between Pedro and Fedra has failed to produce any children. For this reason, Pedro urges Fedra to convince Hipólito to marry and bring them grandchildren. Once alone with Hipólito, however, Fedra confesses her love. Hipólito rejects her and swears never to speak with her alone again. Pedro urges Fedra to try once more to convince Hipólito to marry, saying that she must learn to "hablarle al corazón" (327). The second act begins after an unspecified amount of time has lapsed. Fedra is in anguish over Hipólito's coldness towards her. After much discussion with her nurse, Eustaquia, Fedra insists that she speak alone with Hipólito again, "para acabar" (330). Hipólito agrees, however, once they are alone, Fedra is even more aggressive than before. When Hipólito rejects her for the second time, she threatens to tell Pedro that Hipólito is the one soliciting her. Hipólito curses her, and walks out. Pedro overhears Hipólito's harsh words and demands an explanation from Fedra. She accuses Hipólito. Pedro calls Hipólito to the room, and he, in turn, does not accuse his stepmother; he only claims he is innocent. Pedro insists Hipólito leave the house. In the final act, Fedra is worse than before; we learn that she has poisoned herself with "unas pastillas" (357). She tells Eustaquia that she must confess her lies to redeem herself and to reunite father and son, which she does in the form of a letter that Eustaquia is to deliver to Pedro after she dies. Unamuno deliberately chooses to have Fedra die off-stage (303). As she dies, the spectator witnesses the conversations of those waiting outside Fedra's room while others have their final visit with her. The most dramatic moment occurs when Hipólito, who has returned, is in the room with Fedra—as Unamuno describes, "la pobre, presa del

amor trágico, y su víctima, su hijastro, se miran a los ojos bajo los ojos de la Esfinge" (303)—while Pedro waits anxiously outside. Once Fedra dies, Eustaquia delivers the letter to Pedro. Hipólito affirms that Fedra's confession is true, and father and son reconcile. Pedro admires Fedra's honesty and sacrifice, claiming that she is "una santa mártir" (363).

The importance of the timing of this drama with *Del sentimiento* cannot be understated. Most fundamentally, *Fedra* represents a struggle between the head and the heart, between reason and passion, the central struggle of Unamuno's philosophical essays as well. Orringer claims that Unamuno immersed himself in the passions of classic tragedy, "[t]o write *Del sentimiento trágico* in a deep, penetrating fashion, allowing him to think out his sentiment and to feel out his thought" (550). Regarding the story of Fedra, Orringer concludes that, "[t]he passion-reason dilemma inherent in her sentimental biography may well explain why Unamuno chose precisely this myth and none other to dramatize" (552). The passion-reason dilemma allows Unamuno to explore fully the *hombre de carne y hueso* and thereby to delineate several recurring themes of *Del sentimiento*, such as the tragic nature of love, selfishness, the instinct towards self-perpetuation and the enigma of the meaning of existence. Franco considers these themes, which he calls "temas antropológicos", and concludes that, "[e]l asunto de *Fedra* no es sino un pretexto para trazar una posible salida para el hombre, un camino que le lleve hasta Dios, garantizador de la inmortalidad" (152). However, as we will see, the existence of such a God and Fedra's redemption are far from certain in this drama, and after her death, the living are still left with the question: "¿Para qué vivir? ¿Para qué haber nacido?" (359).

The opening lines of the play establish the nature of Fedra's struggle:

> EUSTAQUIA. Pero qué, ¿no se te quita eso de la cabeza, Fedra?
>
> FEDRA. ¡Ay, Eustaquia! Si hubiese de ser de la cabeza sólo, ya se me habría quitado; pero...
>
> EUSTAQUIA. El corazón es más rebelde, lo sé. (305)

Throughout the play, Fedra is represented as unable to control her passion with a rational understanding of what is socially appropriate. After her first disastrous confession to Hipólito, Fedra laments: "Esto es más fuerte que yo. No sé quién me empuja desde dentro..." (322). Orringer tells us that "Fedra receives constant reminders of the absurdity of her passion in a rationally ordered universe. Nonetheless, she struggles against reason in order to continue to live" (552). Fedra's opposite is Marcelo, the family friend and doctor. He represents cool reasoning, in contrast to Fedra's passion. He reminds Pedro that "[d]onde hay enigmas sobro yo; soy incompatible con la Esfinge" (344). Later, as Fedra dies, Pedro asks Marcelo if he knows anything about the "enfermedad de su alma," to which Marcelo responds: "El alma no entra en mi profesión. Y si he de decirte la verdad, no creo en ella ni en sus enfermedades" (352). Owing to his antithetical relation to her, Fedra harbors a natural disliking of her husband's closest friend. When Pedro first mentions him, Fedra shouts, "¡Dale con Marcelo!" (312). Pedro, who is blind to Fedra's passion, asks, "¿por qué esa mala voluntad a mi mejor amigo?" (312). After Fedra has overdosed herself, she explains to Eustaquia the awful weight that Marcelo's gaze—the gaze of reason—had upon her: "Y luego ese Marcelo, ese terrible Marcelo...; su mirada penetrábame hasta lo más hondo; era mi demonio de la guarda, mi acusador" (349-50).

While the source of Fedra's passion has been considered in previous criticism primarily as a product of heredity, or as a fusing of maternal and sexual love, González-del-Valle argues that these explanations alone are inadequate; "la pasión de Fedra es una manifestación de su egoísmo personal" (40). There is textual evidence to support all of these views; that heredity, frustrated maternal instincts, and personal selfishness are all causes of Fedra's passion. We must therefore conclude that through his *Fedra*, Unamuno explores the possibility of various motivating factors for Fedra's feelings and actions, all of which have a basis in *Del sentimiento*, and none of which are entirely independent from each other. According to Unamuno, heredity, maternal instincts and selfishness are all part of human nature—in this case, of female human nature—and therefore have a role to play in the larger passion-reason struggle.

In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the Greek gods are the source of Phaedra's passion; she is the victim of Aphrodite, who wishes to punish her stepson's exclusive worship of the chaste goddess of hunting, Artemis, by causing his stepmother to fall passionately in love with him. In the Greek tragedy, her passion is undoubtedly beyond her control. González-del-Valle recognizes that Unamuno uses the theme of biological heredity as a means of modernizing the Greek tragedy while maintaining Fedra's passion as a question of fate. "Unamuno en *Fedra* convierte a la fatalidad divina del teatro griego en una fatalidad humana (algo patológico) que responde a las leyes de la herencia" (43). However, González-del-Valle concludes that "[t]al fuerza del destino es, en nuestra opinión, aparente y no algo que en sí pueda decirse sea el factor que domine los actos de Fedra a través de la obra" (43). Nevertheless, the suggestion that Fedra inherited her tendency towards unbridled passion from her mother abounds in the text. In the opening

discussion Eustaquia lets the reader know that there is more to her mother's history than Fedra is aware of. When Fedra begs Eustaquia to tell her more about her mother, Eustaquia mutters to herself, "¡Si lo supiera todo...!" (306). Shortly thereafter, Eustaquia further develops the relationship between mother and daughter when Fedra claims that there is some other force "que llevo dentro y me domina y arrastra" by claiming: "¡Como su madre!" (309). At the end of the play, Marcelo gives the definitive diagnosis of heredity as the rational explanation of Fedra's passion.

> MARCELO. ¿Para qué soy médico, señora? Además, conocí a su madre, a la madre de Fedra; he conocido a su hermana; sé algo, por tradición de familia, de su abuela...
>
> EUSTAQUIA. Dejemos viejas historias...
>
> MARCELO. Sí, dejémoslas; pero, señora, hay cosas que van con la sangre...

Much as allusions to Fedra's mother are prevalent in the text, the protagonist also makes constant reference to her own fate. Several striking examples are: "¡[L]a fatalidad, la fatalidad! ... ¿No ves aquí, ama, la mano de la fatalidad o de la Providencia? ... Eso es lo malo, ama, el camino; pero una vez que llega... ¡Adónde sea, qué sé yo..., al destino!" (307); "Esto es providencial" (309); "Es la fatalidad, Hipólito, a la que no se puede, a la que no se debe resistir..." (320). González-del-Valle, however, perceives these allusions to her fate as further proof of Fedra's *egoísmo*: "Por su parte las referencias que Fedra hace al poder de fuerzas fatídicas sobre ella responde en general a su deseo de no culparse a sí misma por sus faltas" (42). Unamuno clearly wants the spectator-reader to view Fedra's passion, at least in part, as a product of her fate; the

closing lines of the play spoken by Eustaquia conclude the same: "¡Tenía razón, es el sino!" (363). It is interesting to note that Alfonso Reyes views this constant suggestion of fate and heredity as a fault of *Fedra*: " Reputamos como un error la continua invocación a la Fatalidad puesta en boca de los personajes de la Fedra... El público es quien debió, por su cuenta, pronunciar la palabra Fatalidad" (Qtd. in González-del-Valle 41).[22]

Franco's analysis of this play focuses on Fedra's maternal instincts as a primary motivation for her passion for Hipólito. "Como tantas criaturas unamunianas, padece de ansia de maternidad. En esto se diferencia esta Fedra, pues en Eurípides y en Racine es madre" (145). The fact that in all previous versions Fedra is a mother suggests that Unamuno deliberately created a Fedra that would embody his views of love—particularly of female, maternal love—by depriving her of children. Remember that Unamuno claims, in *Del sentimiento*, that, "en la mujer todo amor es maternal" (183). Seeing all female love as maternal, it is easy to imagine how Unamuno might have viewed Fedra's intense physical attraction to Hipólito as perfectly compatible with her desire to be a mother. Once again, there is ample evidence for this view in the text. Fedra remarks to Eustaquia: "Empezó llamándome "madre". ¡Madre! ¡Qué nombre tan sabroso! ¡Cómo remeje las entrañas!" (307). Shortly after, she recognizes that Hipólito is not truly, biologically, her son and laments: "Y si al menos tuviese un hijo que me defendiera... ... Un hijo mío, de mis entrañas, uno a quien hubiese dado mi pecho. (*Estremeciéndose*.) ¡Pero a Hipólito...!" (310). Finally, Fedra suggests that carnal and maternal love have confused themselves in her: "Y como a tal le quiero... ¿No? ¡Sí! ¿Cómo pueden juntarse los dos amores, o salir el uno del otro? Y luego, a él, a Pedro, como a padre..."

[22] González-del-Valle takes this quote from, "Sobre la nueva *Fedra*". *Simpatías y*

(310). Basing himself on such evidence from the play, Franco describes Fedra's anguish as follows: "Hipólito, el hijastro, ni puede satisfacerla como hijo, ni puede ser su amante. Al no corresponder a sus demandas amorosas, Hipólito le está negando la posibilidad de ser madre" (146).

It is important to note, however, that Unamuno's Fedra, while exhibiting many characteristics of his description of the nature of love, does not perfectly fit the mold of Unamuno's description of female love. While there is textual evidence that Fedra is driven in part by her maternal instincts, her love for Hipólito is dominated by her physical desire for him. It is this physical desire that allows for her selfish behaviors, and causes her to fail to exhibit Unamuno's claim that "[l]a mujer se rinde al amante porque le siente sufrir con el deseo" (*Del sentimiento* 184). In Fedra's case, as we well know, *she* is the one suffering with desire. Unamuno describes love as inherently selfish and therefore tragic, in *Del sentimiento* (Ch. VII). Orringer argues that, "[i]n his most significant philosophical work, Unamuno presents love as the most tragic entity of the universe and of life" (558). Love is selfish, because it is based on our desire to possess the loved one as well as on our instinct towards self-perpetuation, physically, through children, or spiritually (181). Love is tragic because, ultimately, children will also die, "[p]orque lo que perpetúan los amantes sobre la tierra es la carne del dolor, es el dolor, es la muerte" (182), and because we are never able to find the eternal, spiritual fulfillment we suspect love to contain: "El amor busca con furia a través del amado algo que está allende éste, y como no lo halla, se desespera" (180). For these reasons, Unamuno concludes: "Hay, sin duda, algo de trágicamente destructivo en el fondo del amor" (181). The selfish nature of

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diferencias. México: Porrúa, 1945. 147-48.

love that Unamuno describes brings us again to González-del-Valle's view that Fedra's greatest fault is her *egoísmo*. We can now see how all views of the causes of Fedra's passion are interconnected. Unamuno's drama argues that Fedra inherited a tendency towards uncontrollable passion from her mother. This prompts her intense love for Hipólito, which is fuelled by her unsatisfied maternal instincts. Love, however, is inherently selfish and Fedra, overwhelmed by her love, therefore behaves in selfish ways. Given the biological nature of Fedra, as well as Unamuno's views on the nature of love and women's maternal instincts, fate can be viewed as pushing her to her actions in this play.

Antonio Buero Vallejo, in many places, argues that all tragedy represents at some level the conflict between *necesidad* and *libertad*, or between fate and free will.[23] This struggle pairs well with the passion-reason dilemma of *Fedra*. If Fedra were able to use reason to overcome her passion, or at the very least to control her actions, she would thereby overcome her tragic fate. Unamuno recognizes as much through the voice of Eustaquia who warns Fedra: "¡Hablar de fatalidad es querer ser vencida, Fedra!" (307). It is only maintaining this view, which is at its heart an assertion of the power of free will, that it is meaningful to judge Fedra's actions as selfish.[24] If we were to blame everything on fate, it would be tempting then to claim that all of Fedra's actions are beyond her control, thereby freeing her from any blame. While Unamuno time and again invokes fate, it is evident that this tragedy is intended to maintain the struggle between free will

[23] See, for example, "Conversación", Buero Vallejo "El Sentido", and "La Tragedia".
[24] This view, which allows for moral judgment, leads Valbuena-Briones to find yet another similarity between Unamuno and Seneca: "[A]mbos autores coinciden en que la moralidad buena o mala tiñe la obra de arte" (92).

and fate as much as between reason and passion, as we will see more clearly in the conclusion.

Supporting González-del-Valle's view that Fedra's passion is largely the manifestation of her own personal selfishness is the prevalence of this theme in the work itself. Not only are there many examples of selfish behaviors of all three main characters of this play, Hipólito and Pedro use the words *egoísmo* and *egoista* repeatedly. Hipólito argues in the beginning that, "[l]os hombres caseros, comineros, suelen serlo por egoísmo" (314). Pedro, frustrated by Fedra's inability to convince Hipólito to marry claims, "egoístas todos...; egoísta él, egoísta tú..." (327). By the play's end, however, both father and son turn the accusation towards themselves. First, Pedro sees his own selfishness once he believes that Hipólito has made advances towards Fedra. "¡Pero... me sentía tan solo! ¡No me bastaba él! ¿Y por qué no le casé con ella? ¡Oh, egoísta, egoísta! No tuve paciencia a que me diese nietos; quise tener más hijos... ¡Y de Fedra!" (340). When he returns to his dying stepmother, Hipólito confesses, "mi virtud, una virtud ciega, era egoísmo" (355). By showing this conversion by means of recognition in Pedro and Hipólito, Unamuno is urging the spectator to consider the theme of selfishness and, perhaps, to view Fedra with the same scrutiny with which Pedro and Hipólito view themselves.

González-del-Valle argues that, "Fedra atiende desmedidamente su interés personal, en este caso su deseo carnal por Hipólito, llegando a chantajearlo y a confesar que Hipólito trató de seducirla sin detenerse ella a considerar el sufrimiento que traería a Pedro y al mismo Hipólito" (43). His study shows that Fedra does not undergo a similar recognition of her selfishness most effectively by analyzing the motivations behind her

suicide. He calls Fedra's death the "único escape y pago adecuado a su pecado" (39). While Fedra claims her suicide will serve the purpose of reuniting father and son and of bringing her "la paz eterna" (348), Unamuno shows several other motives behind her suicide as well. As she is dying, she tells Eustaquia: "Ahora vendrá a verme morir, a darme el beso de viático..., el último... ¡No! ¡El primero! Ahora vendrá a perdonarme" (349). Fedra argues that she must confess because, "sólo la verdad purifica," but once again reveals a self-centered motivation for this act: "quiero vivir pura en su memoria" (350). González-del-Valle concludes that Fedra's suicide reflects, above all, "su apetencia de ser venerada por todos" (43). Rodríquez Ramírez sees a similar motivation behind Fedra's suicide: "busca alejarse de este sentimiento carnal con la muerte; ésta es una forma de ser compadecido" (107). Fedra will not receive Hipólito's physical love, but with her death she pursues his spiritual love through his sympathy and pity. As we recall, Unamuno claims in *Del sentimiento*: "Amar en espíritu es compadecer, y quien más compadece más ama ... El hombre ansía ser amado, o, lo que es igual, ansía ser compadecido" (183-4).

Hipólito also exhibits the selfishness of human nature through his actions in this play. According to his confession, his blindness to Fedra's passion was the result of his self-centeredness. Citing various instances in the drama where his innocence seems unbelievable, González-del-Valle argues that "[e]n muchas ocasiones su carácter resulta algo forzado, poco convincente" (46). Franco's analysis coincides with this opinion: "La ingenuidad—o, si se quiere, ceguera—de Hipólito es casi inconcebible: en esto estriba su debilidad como personaje" (149). However, González-del-Valle also suggests the following: "Ante lo que él dice cabe preguntarse: ¿es que Hipólito teme corresponder a

su madrastra?" (47). I agree with this assertion and it leads us to consider another possible interpretation of Hipólito's unbelievable blindness. Following the text, it is quite reasonable to assume that Unamuno's Hipólito is forcing this blindness upon himself. Considering Unamuno's claim that, "[e]l hombre ansía ser amado," it makes sense that Hipólito would indeed be flattered by his stepmother's passion for him and that he would prolong his blindness to it as a way of continuing to exist as her beloved object. The self-centered *ceguera* he later regrets, then, would be failing to anticipate the disastrous effects Fedra's passion would have on the entire family, and not a blindness to Fedra's passion *per se*.

There are several suggestions that Hipólito is not as innocent as he presents himself to be in the text. In their first encounter in this drama, Hipólito suggests that Fedra join him on a hunting trip in the country: "Conmigo de caza. Ya verás cuando te tumbes al pie de un roble, cara al cielo, cómo se te curan esas aprensiones y se te acaban esas palpitaciones de corazón. No hay como el campo; ¡allí se ve todo claro!" (315). He suggests this after Fedra has given him the kiss that he would later describe as "más largo, más apretado... ... Me diste miedo con él" (317). This naiveté of Hipólito is indeed unbelievable and can only be explained either as an example of Unamuno's inattention to verisimilitude or as intentionally created by the author. If it is intentional, it would seem that Unamuno wants to portray Hipólito as encouraging his stepmother's passion while feigning blindness to it. In the same conversation, as Fedra tries to find out if Hipólito is already in love with someone, she tells him that, "[e]sas cosas no se confiesan, y menos a los padres," to which he responds, "[p]ero tú, en rigor de verdad, no eres mi madre..." (318). Hipólito is not only reminding Fedra that they are not biologically related, he is

revealing that he too is very much aware of this fact, a fact that makes an amorous relationship between the two possible. When Fedra admits that she could not bear seeing Hipólito with another woman and asks if he understands what she is confessing, he claims, "[n]o quisiera entenderte..." (319), which gives credence to the position that Hipólito has been engaging in self-deception. Hipólito seems to show what González-del-Valle described as fear of returning Fedra's love when he claims: "Estás loca, madre, loca perdida, y tu locura es contagiosa" (321). If Hipólito has indeed been encouraging Fedra's passion, there is no denying that he still rejects her advances. This, however, can be explained by the selfish nature of love. In *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno says that, "cada uno de los amantes busca poseer al otro" (181). As the still distant object of Fedra's passion, Hipólito is very much in control. If he gives in to her advances, however, he will be allowing that she, in a certain sense, possess him. At first, Hipólito's protests are mild. He begs Fedra to think of his father (320). However, Hipólito's rejection becomes more intense as he becomes aware of the desire to possess the other involved in her love:

> HIPÓLITO. Ahora empiezas a ahogarte, madre, y a ahogarme...
>
> FEDRA. De ti, sólo de ti depende Hipóltio. ¡Quiero ser tuya, toda tuya!
>
> HIPÓLITO. ¡No, lo que tú quieres es que sea tuyo yo!
>
> FEDRA. ¡Sí, mío, mío, mío y sólo mío! (320-21)

It is only after this exchange that Hipólito really insults her: "¡Antes querría verme con una jabalina acorralada!" (321). This conversation suggests that what Hipólito is most alarmed and offended by is the idea of belonging to someone else. He seems to object much less strongly to simply being the one for whom Fedra feels intense passion. Only later, as she is dying, does Hipólito come to regret his behavior. As we recall, he claims

that his "blindness" was due to his *egoísmo*, adding that, "[s]intiéndome firme no sentí que se caía ella..." (355), thus recognizing his previous inability to feel compassion for Fedra's position. González-del-Valle argues that, "[d]ichas auto-acusaciones nos hacen creer que Hipólito coqueteó con Fedra sin saberlo," leading him to conclude: "En cualquier caso, sus actos anteriores reflejan un egoísmo, una preocupación por lo suyo solamente, que no deja de ser una deficiencia en este personaje a pesar de su arrepentimiento a finales de la obra" (47).

Regarding Fedra's husband, González-del-Valle claims that, "[e]l egoísmo de Pedro es algo obvio" (47). As he confesses, he was selfish to have married Fedra instead of marrying her with Hipólito, and he was selfish in his impatient desire for grandchildren. González-del-Valle also points to another indication of Pedro's selfishness: "su obsesión con el honor" (48). Pedro reveals this obsession when he speaks with Marcelo after Fedra has accused Hipólito of pursuing her: "¿Lo sabes tú? Pero cállalo, ¿eh? Si lo sabes, ¡cállalo!, ¡cállalo! Que no lo sepa nadie. ¡Ni tú mismo!" (343). Even as Fedra is dying, Pedro continues to worry about what Marcelo may know (352). González-del-Valle argues that "[e]ste egoísmo suyo culmina cuando, en vez de preocuparse por el estado de la moribunda Fedra, se pregunta qué se dirán Hipólito y ella en estos últimos momentos en que se encuentran juntos" (48). It is important to note that Pedro's selfishness serves a technical function in the drama; it makes him what González-del-Valle calls the "fuerza catalítica" of the action of the drama (47). It is Pedro's selfishness that brought them all together, and it is his selfishness that continues to encourage Fedra to speak with Hipólito alone. He, like Hipólito, is so concerned with his own desires that he fails to see the obvious.

In his *Exordio*, Unamuno claims that this drama "no es sino una modernización de la de Eurípides, o mejor dicho, el mismo argumento de ella, sólo que con personajes de hoy en día, y cristianos por tanto—lo que la hace muy otra" (302). Recalling Steiner's claim that "Christian tragedy" is a term in itself paradoxical (31), we must consider for a moment whether or not the "Christianization" of this tragedy renders it un-tragic. Rodríguez Ramírez seems to think so: "No debe olvidarse que esta Fedra está en un contexto español marcadamente religioso; por esta misma razón, considero que es la menos trágica de las tres obras, porque tiene como salida del laberinto la fe y la esperanza" (108). However, Unamuno's *Fedra* does not show that an afterlife and redemption are guaranteed for Fedra. Quite to the contrary, and in keeping with the tone of *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno only portrays a character who hopes that death will bring her these things, but the drama itself gives us plenty of reasons to doubt that it will. Orringer agrees that, "at the denouement of the drama, Unamuno leaves the question open as to whether Fedra has achieved her own redemption, her husband Pedro's, and her stepson Hipólito's" (553). Fedra argues to Eustaquia, who encourages her to find refuge in God, that praying is useless for her. She claims: "Pido consuelo y luces a la Virgen de los Dolores, y parece me empuja..." (309). Later, she argues that she has tried praying but that, "eso me enciende más" (328), confessing that, "con estas cosas no sé ya si creo o no" (329).

Regarding her suicide, Eustaquia warns her that it is a great sin, arguing that only God can determine when a person ought to die. Fedra argues, "¡Dios me la manda!," to which Eustaquia exclaims: "¡No blasfemes, Fedra!" (351). It does indeed seem strange that someone who has faith in the Christian God would commit suicide to reach that God

sooner, given that such faith tells you that suicide is a great sin. Unamuno, in *Del sentimiento*, offers perhaps a better understanding of Fedra's suicide when he claims that "[l]os más de los suicidas no se quitarían la vida si tuviesen la seguridad de no morirse nunca sobre la tierra. Él que se mata, se mata por no esperar a morirse" (270). For this reason, Franco concludes: "Nadie puede negar que éste es un drama que se aparta de toda concepción cristiana ortodoxa. *Fedra* es una obra cristiana en la misma medida que lo puede ser *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*" (156). The fact that, in *Fedra*, God's final justice and salvation are far from assured, makes it a Christian tragedy that is quite different from the sort that Steiner spoke of.

The plot of this Unamunian Christian tragedy most neatly follows the classic Aristotelian model of a tragic plot when compared with *La Esfinge* and *La venda*, as well as with all of Unamuno's dramas. It is important to remember that of his eleven original dramas, eight of which could arguably be called tragedies, Unamuno gave this subtitle only to *Fedra*, most likely due to the precedent set by the authors treating this theme before him. Formally, this tragedy takes place in three acts, which serve to present, develop and then resolve the conflict, respectively. While there is no music in this drama, the three secondary characters can once again be viewed as a chorus (González-del-Valle 49). Its plot undoubtedly portrays the downfall of the hero Fedra. However, critics seem to disagree as to whether or not Fedra's downfall is due to her own, personal error. As we have seen, González-del-Valle believes that Fedra's greatest error is attributed to her selfishness, which leads her to commit the more specific error of pursuing and then even more regrettably accusing Hipólito. Franco, however, gives more weight to the inescapably tragic nature of love, which prevents him from accusing Fedra

of committing an error. He argues that in *Fedra*, "[l]a culpa no la tiene nadie. La culpa está en el amor, fuerza fatal" (150). For the powerful hold that love and passion have on her, Franco concludes that, "[n]o es que Fedra pase por una experiencia más o menos trágica, sino que ella es, por esencia, un ser trágico" (152). Yet the difference between these two critics' interpretations can be viewed as representing both sides of the struggle between free will and fate in tragedy. González-del-Valle, as we have seen, believes Fedra is a character that ought to, through her own free will, control her selfish actions in spite of her passion. Franco, on the other hand, seems to view her actions as the inevitable consequence of her passion. As we saw in the analysis of Fedra's selfishness, Unamuno does not resolve the struggle between free will and fate in this tragedy; he merely presents the nature of this conflict, which is parallel to the struggle between the head and the heart. In any case, there is a clear moment of *anagnorisis* in *Fedra*, when she recognizes that she was wrong to accuse Hipólito: "[A]hora sí que creo y reconozco y confieso mi crimen" (351). Fedra sees her suicide and confession as the only appropriate response to this error; it will reunite father and son as well as bring Fedra much-desired peace and reverence from her husband and stepson. Whether or not this is a noble response to her downfall is not entirely resolved in the play and is therefore left up to the opinion of the spectator-reader. Unamuno has Pedro conclude that Fedra, "ha sido una santa mártir" (363), but González-del-Valle believes that the reader will not share this conclusion: "Escapa a todo tipo de razonamiento que Fedra sea considerada una santa mártir cuando fue ella misma la que provocó los sufrimientos de Pedro e Hipólito" (45). Still, as we recall, González-del-Valle considers Fedra's death an appropriate punishment for her errors (39). He also recognizes that Fedra is a

sympathetic character for whom we can feel fear and pity: "[E]s un personaje por el que se siente un cierto grado de buena voluntad, ya que en ella se perciben muchas de las deficiencias que hermanan a los seres humanos" (38).

Fedra, which is an example from Unamuno's "mature" period, not only has a more cohesive tragic plot, but also shows improvement technically from his earlier plays. Gullón argues that "en intensidad no cede la española a sus predecesoras, siendo tan exaltada y tan sobria como ellas" (239). Elizalde shares this opinion: "Ha sabido [Unamuno] elaborar sobre un mito clásico una obra impecable de vanguardia" (57). Even Unamuno seemed to consider *Fedra* his best dramatic work thus far. In a letter written to the actor Fernando Díaz de Mendoza on November 6, 1911, Unamuno compares this drama to two others he had sent him before, most likely *El pasado que vuelve* and either *La difunta* or *La princesa doña Lambra*: "El argumento es, como usted ve, tremendo y estoy muy contento de cómo lo he desenvuelto, mucho más contento que de los dramas que le remití" (*O. C.* V, 58). In the first place, Unamuno's more intense focus on portraying the *hombre de carne y hueso* seems to improve the development of his characters' personalities. Fedra, Hipólito and Pedro all share a complexity that Unamuno's previous characters lack. The *desnudez* to which Unamuno aspires also seems to serve him well. Because of this *desnudez*, everything in *Fedra* hangs on the words spoken. Reflecting his reference to "teatro poético", which, "será el que ... ponga en pie almas agitadas por las pasiones eternas y nos las meta al alma, purificándonosla" (303), Unamuno's language in *Fedra* is stark and direct. It often appeals to greater Unamunian concepts, such as faith, passion, loneliness, etc., while still evoking sometimes beautiful poetic images that describe the passions. Consider, for example, the

following description from Fedra: "Pero no puedo más, y voy a acabar. Viviendo con él, cada día a su lado en la mesa, viéndole cuando acaba de levantarse de la cama, con el sueño todavía en los ojos... ¡Es como una llovizna continua, cala hasta el tuétano!" (310). Fedra also exclaims, referring to her mother, "¡Qué fatídica niebla vela su memoria!" (306). After Hipólito has rejected her and Fedra is in despair she recalls, "[a]quel beso de fuego en lágrimas" (322). This poetic language gives the tragic themes an exalted air, a sense of grandiosity, which intensifies Fedra's passions for the spectator.

González-del-Valle directs our attention to another dramatic technique that Unamuno develops in this play. "A través del doble sentido que adquieren algunas conversaciones entre los personajes logra don Miguel dar a éstos mayor profundidad y crea resortes algo irónicos que ayudan a la precipitación de la acción" (50). There are indeed many situations in the text where the spectator-reader is aware of a second meaning to the words spoken that one or more of the characters are not aware of. We have already considered Hipólito's invitation to take Fedra to the country. The spectator knows how this invitation affects her, yet both Pedro and Hipólito seem completely unaware of this. The "doble sentido" to which González-del-Valle refers, however, occurs most often in Fedra's conversations with Pedro, the catalyst of the play's action. For example, when Pedro is encouraging Fedra to talk to Hipólito about marrying, he argues:

> PEDRO. Si a ti no te atiende, ¿a quién atenderá? Porque él, tan seriote, tan esquivo, ese oso cazador y cazador de osos, contigo se ablanda. Te adora...
>
> FEDRA. ¿Lo crees, Pedro?

PEDRO. ¿Que si lo creo? ¡Te adora! Él lo tapa, como sus sentimientos todos, pero adora en ti, no lo dudes. Y tú, tú le quieres como a hijo propio, ¿no?

FEDRA. ¡Le quiero, sí, le quiero con toda mi alma!

The contrast here between what is meant and how it is interpreted is clear. When Pedro is disappointed that Fedra was unable to convince Hipólito to marry, he argues: "¡Ah, Fedra, es que no pusiste ni empeño ni calor en tu demanda! ... No, no, porque tú eres de las que consiguen cuanto se proponen. Si hubieras sabido hablarle al corazón..." (327). Again, it is easy to see how Pedro's words, albeit unintentionally, push Fedra to her second attempt to seduce Hipólito, giving her new hope. This "doble sentido" is not only enjoyable for the spectator, it allows for greater penetration of the minds of the characters, which in turn makes them easier to relate to and feel the proper tragic emotions for.

The final lines of *Fedra* are spoken after her death, when Pedro has finally learned the truth. We have already analyzed parts of this dialogue, however it will be useful to consider it again here in its entirety:

PEDRO. ¡Después de todo, ha sido una santa mártir! ¡Ha sabido morir!

HIPÓLITO. ¡Sepamos vivir, padre!

EUSTAQUIA. ¡Tenía razón, es el sino!

Unamuno evokes several recurring themes in these few lines: religion, death, life, reason, and fate. Unamuno closes this play with a final representation of the struggle between free will and fate, much as he opens the play with the struggle between passion and reason. Hipólito's "sepamos vivir" is at once hopeful and suggestive of a free-will

view of the world. It implies a move forward, beyond the sadness of Fedra's death, towards a life lived well through good choices. Eustaquia's "es el sino", however, changes the tone by reintroducing the concept of fate, which implies that free will and human choices are futile in the face of destined tragedy. Orringer says of Unamuno that, "[h]is idea of tragedy, like Hegel's, implies ... a never complete reconciliation between hope and despair, order and chaos" (552). Just as the tragic sense of life is based on a never-ending struggle between faith, which springs from passion, and reason, Unamuno's tragedy depicts the same, which leads to the cycle of hope and doubt that we saw in *La Esfinge* and *La venda*. While Hipólito's words suggest a positive move away from the tragic and offer hope, Eustaquia reminds the spectator that we are never entirely free from it, thus offering reason to doubt. Similarly, *Del sentimiento*, as we have seen, argues that, just as the heart is moved to hope for immortality and a life with absolute meaning, the head prompts new doubt. Yet, as we remember, as doubt leads to "el fondo del abismo", there is new reason for hope (167). The relationship between hope and doubt is cyclical in Unamuno's tragedies because one always seems to prompt the other. In the following two chapters, we will see how Buero Vallejo, with greater success than Unamuno, represents this same fundamental struggle in his tragedies, between passion and reason, hope and doubt. Unamuno, through his philosophical essays, novels, poetry, and clearly his theater, develops a modern analysis of this classic struggle, which is Kierkegaardian at its heart, and which has left its mark on modern tragedy.

Chapter 4: The Tragedy of Hope

In his 1958 essay on the genre of tragedy, Antonio Buero Vallejo tells us: "A través de los tiempos y de las más dispares concepciones de la vida, los hombres han convenido en llamar 'tragedias' a determinadas obras escritas para la escena. La permanencia del concepto responde, sin duda, a una necesidad del ser humano" (63). Buero argues that all tragedy is founded in hope and that, therefore, it is inaccurate to consider this genre "pessimistic," in spite of the frequent destruction of its heroes. "Si se escribe, escríbese siempre la tragedia esperanzada, aunque se crea estar escribiendo la tragedia de la desesperación ... de otro modo no se angustiaría" (76). The hope that Buero sees tragedy offering the spectator is founded in human possibilities to surpass the limitations imposed on the human race by necessity. Antonio Iniesta Galvañ tells us that Buero, like Unamuno, suffered a religious crisis at the age of fifteen (23). Following this crisis, Buero retained a religious way of perceiving the world, even though he lost his ability to believe in a Christian God: "[L]a estructura de mi pensamiento es religiosa, aunque yo no crea" (*O.C. I* xxxvi). Instead, a faith in human beings and their possibilities, which is religious in nature, establishes itself in Buero. He claims that this faith is intimately connected to his need to write tragedy:

> Se escribe porque se espera, pese a toda duda. Pese a toda duda, creo y espero en el hombre, como creo y espero en otras cosas: en la verdad, en la belleza, en la rectitud, en la libertad. Y por eso escribo de las pobres y grandes cosas del hombre; hombre yo también de un tiempo oscuro, sujeto

> a las más graves pero esperanzadas interrogantes. (Qtd. in Doménech, *El teatro* 28)[25]

As Buero insists in his previous quote, the hope he finds in tragedy exists *in spite of* all doubt. Hope and its negative counterpart, doubt, are therefore inextricably linked in Buerian tragedy and, according to him, in all tragedy. Doménech points to "un rasgo eminentemente dubitativo, receloso, más inquiridor que afirmativo, de ese teatro trágico," which is comprised of dramas that "apenas pueden responder a las interrogaciones que las animan con otra cosa que con la reiteración de la pregunta; con la conmovida duda ante los problemas humanos que entrevé" (*El* teatro 27). Before considering the extent to which Buero's dramas are examples of modern tragedy, it is crucial to first analyze his own theory of tragedy and the integral role that hope and doubt play in this theory. This chapter will therefore dedicate itself to Buero's concept of the tragedy of hope, focusing on two of its most remarkable aspects: the extent to which it harmonizes with the most important Aristotelian requirements for tragedy and the great similarities it shares with Unamuno's tragic sense of life, followed by a brief analysis of the development of Buero's theater.

One of the principal arguments of "La tragedia" is that tragedy is not pessimistic; to the contrary, it is one of the most hopeful of literary forms. Buero claims that, "[e]l auténtico pesimismo es, aproximadamente, lo contrario de la tragedia. El pesimismo es negador, mientras la tragedia propugna toda clase de valores" (74).[26] It is important to note that Buero's insistence upon tragedy not being pessimistic is in part a response to

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[25] Doménech finds this quote in "El autor y su obra. El teatro de Buero Vallejo visto por Buero Vallejo." *Primer Acto* 1 (April 1957): 6.

some of the early criticism of his first dramas. Referring to the first reviews of *En la ardiente oscuridad*, Luis Iglesias Feijoo reminds us that "no faltaron acusaciones que se habían oído ya con motivo del anterior estreno del autor acerca de la amargura, el pesimismo, la falta de soluciones" (*La trayectoria* 55).[27] In response to such criticism, Buero recognizes that tragedy, "puede terminar en la culminación del infortunio, sin que, al parecer, ofrezca ninguna solución ni aporte sentido positivo alguno que mitigue la desgracia representada" (75-76). However, unlike many modern theorists of tragedy, such as George Steiner, Buero recognizes that tragedy does not always have to end badly. In "El sentido de mi teatro," he quite correctly reminds us that "en algunas de las tragedias helénicas más importantes, se resuelve [el conflicto entre necesidad y libertad] en la victoria sobre el hado funesto que gravita sobre los héroes" (8). In "La tragedia," Buero explains the modern tendency to fail to recognize that some tragedies have happy endings in a manner that is remarkably reminiscent of Stephen White's study, which shows that not only does Aristotle's definition of tragedy allow for a happy ending, but also that Aristotle *preferred* such endings, and Walter Kaufmann's insistence that the misfortunate event in tragedy need not be inevitable:

> Entre la sediciente concepción fatalista de la antigüedad y la moderna concepción cristiana se ha querido ver un divorcio esencial: el mismo que separaría la tragedia pura del drama y la implacable "fuerza del sino" ... de la libre actuación del protagonista y sus posibilidades de alcanzar un final

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26 All quotes from Buero, unless otherwise noted, are from "La tragedia."

27 For a more detailed summary of the public response to Buero's plays when they were first represented on the stage, Feijoo's comprehensive study of Buero's theater, *La*

> "feliz." No hay tales diferencias. Las tragedias con final "feliz" o con decisiones desencadenantes por parte del protagonista se encuentran ya en los griegos. Tragedias: ellos no las llamaron de otro modo, y nosotros tampoco tenemos por qué. (73)

Nevertheless, Buero insists that all tragedies, even those that end badly, cannot be called pessimistic. "[L]as de final funesto o falto de salida aparente no afirman el imperio de la necesidad inexorable sino que son también ... expresiones sutiles pero no menos abiertas del impulso hacia la liberación de nuestras trabas, externas o interiores" ("El sentido" 8).

As we will see in greater detail shortly, Buero considers it one of the primary functions of tragedy to force the spectator to recognize his or her own limitations; only then will the spectator be able to hope to surpass those limitations. For this reason as well, Buero argues that tragedy is hopeful and not pessimistic. "Representa, en el terreno del arte, un heroico acto por el que el hombre trata de comprender el dolor y se plantea la posibilidad de superarlo" (75). Connected to this argument is Buero's stance that an absurd view of life, which is indeed pessimistic, is contrary to tragedy. Unlike the person who accepts it as a fact that human existence lacks any ultimate meaning, the tragic hero recognizes this apparent lack of meaning and fights against it.

> El último y mayor efecto moral de la tragedia es un acto de fe. Consiste en llevarnos a creer que la catástrofe está justificada y tiene un sentido, aunque no podamos conocer su justificación ni entender ese sentido. El absurdo del mundo tiene muy poco que ver con la tragedia como último

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trayectoria dramática de Antonio Buero Vallejo, is very useful for Buero's dramas written and represented before 1982, the year that his study was published.

> contenido a deducir, aunque tenga mucha que ver con ella como apariencia a investigar. (71)

Buero therefore concludes that "[n]o hay pesimismo más radical que el de dar por segura la falta de sentido del mundo; y no hay género teatral que más pertinazmente lo busque—cuando no lo encuentre—que el trágico" (75).

The Aristotelianism of Buero's Tragedy of Hope

Buero's theory of tragedy, as his recognition of tragedies with happy endings has shown, is based on a solid understanding of classical tragedy. It is remarkable the extent to which Buero's tragedy of hope fits with the Aristotelian model of this genre. Buero, who defines tragedy as a struggle between free will and necessity, recognizes the important role the tragic hero plays, using his or her own free will, in setting off a chain of events that, governed by the laws of cause and effect, lead to the hero's downfall. In "El sentido de mi teatro," Buero tells us that, "[d]esde sus orígenes, la tragedia nos muestra un conflicto entre necesitad y libertad" (8). In the same essay, Buero concludes that every tragedy, "lleva dentro, como una llama, el amor a la libertad del hombre" (9). This love of "la libertad del hombre" reveals the importance that Buero assigns to human free will in the face of necessity. As we saw in the previous section, Buero considers tragedy hopeful precisely because it affirms the human possibility to surpass one's limitations. In her analysis of the importance of hope in Buero's tragedies, Martha T. Halsey, using very Buerian language, argues that, "[f]ar from presenting man as a victim of the caprice of the gods, or, in modern terms, of the absurdity of the world, tragedy seeks to show that he is the maker of his own destiny" ("Buero Vallejo" 58).

As we saw in the first chapter, Aristotle describes the best tragic plot as one that includes some *hamartia*, or error, that leads to the hero's downfall. Jonathan Lear wishes to add to Aristotle's description of the tragic plot that he calls "simply shocking," with a good man falling into bad fortune, the phrase "for no reason at all." Lear argues that the insistence upon an error causing the "good man's" misfortune shows that, for Aristotle, tragedy must portray tragic events occurring within the constraints of a rational, ordered world (334). Buero echoes these Aristotelian views. In "La tragedia," referring to the *necesidad* side of the *libertad* vs. *necesidad* confrontation, Buero recognizes that, in many tragedies, "[e]ste destino fatídico es muchas veces doblemente horroroso por lo arbitrario, ya que puede provenir del capricho de los dioses o bien, para ciertas concepciones modernas, del absurdo del mundo" (69). Buero also seems to view such a portrayal of *necesidad* as "simply shocking." "Ante tan pavorosa realidad, la única consecuencia a deducir de las tragedias sería la del temor primitivo frente a una divinidad terrible y acaso injusta ... [o] el temor ante la posibilidad de que el mundo carezca de sentido" (69). Buero echoes Aristotle's view that there should exist a rational explanation for the misfortunate events depicted in tragedy: "el destino no es ciego ni arbitrario, ... [l]a tragedia escénica trata de mostrar cómo los catástrofes y desgracias son castigos—o consecuencias automáticas, si preferimos una calificación menos personal—de los errores o excesos de los hombres" (69). Buero uses the model of classic tragedy to support his argument that tragedy has at its core a love of human free will and that it is, therefore, not pessimistic. "Al comienzo de todo encadenamiento trágico de catástrofes, los griegos ponen un acto de libertad humana y no un decreto del destino. Los oráculos y predicciones no hacen otra cosa que indicar sus consecuencias" (70). Much as Aristotle's

insistence upon the existence of a human error in tragedy is essential to his argument against Plato that tragedy does not harm the spectator, Buero's insistence upon this error, which is an act of free will, is essential to his argument that tragedy is hopeful and not pessimistic. While the error may lead to a tragic downfall, it is also an affirmation of free will. Only with free will can the spectator hope either to avoid such a tragic downfall in his or her own life or to overcome it should one occur. Buero recognizes that the third tragedy of the classic trilogy often ended with reconciliation brought on, as was the original catastrophe, by an act of human free will. In his section of "La tragedia" dedicated to trilogies, Buero argues that, "[p]rovocado por un acto libre que se fijaba por lo general en la historia remota de algún antecesor, terminaba por otro acto libre que reparaba los males desencadenados y disolvía el hado" (72).

Buero Vallejo also concurs with Aristotle that the primary function of the poetic arts, particularly of drama, is the *mimesis* of life. In a public conversation with Santos Sanz Villanueva in 1996, Buero claims that, "el teatro ... es uno de los espejos antropológicos más poderosos y certeros que el hombre haya inventado" (43). Intimately connected to the view that theater serves as an anthropological mirror is another Aristotelian concept that Buero shares: that our enjoyment of tragedy comes from the pleasure of learning. Viewing life imitated on the stage gives the spectator a unique perspective from which to observe and learn about human existence. In the same conversation, Buero argues the following about "las tragedias de la vida": "Cuando las reflejamos en la escena ampliamos su sentido ... invitando a que el espectador halle posible[s] soluciones para evitar que cosas así vuelvan a suceder ... De ahí la 'esperanza trágica', aun cuando sólo sea implícita" (39). The cognitive participation of the spectator

is indispensable in Buero's concept of the tragedy of hope. First, the spectator must recognize and learn from the error committed by the tragic hero if there is to be hope that such an error will not be repeated in the future. "La evitación del error sólo puede conseguirse por el conocimiento del error y no por la ignorancia" (78). In addition, complementing Aristotle's insistence upon the admirable response of the tragic hero to misfortune, Buero also maintains that tragedy teaches moral virtue in the face of adversity:

> Y si los hombres no ciegan del todo, seguirán sacando de la tragedia preciosas enseñanzas que les servirán para entender con buen ánimo y afrontar con invencible valor la gran verdad que, por boca de Prometeo, nos llegue a través del tiempo: "El dolor camina, siempre errante, y se sienta por turno a los pies de cada cual. (87)

Buero distinguishes tragedies from merely idle entertainment claiming that, "[s]e escribirán, desde luego, para divertir, pero además, para hacer reflexionar, para conmover, para inducir a pensar, para acercarnos a una imagen de la vida humana cada vez más certera y más compleja" ("Conversation" 41). Buero feels that the role of tragic drama to provoke thought and learning is every bit as relevant today as it was 2500 years ago. When asked in 1996 if he fears that cinema will ultimately do away with theater, Buero responds that "el teatro no puede competir, hoy por hoy, con el cine o con otras formas espectaculares ... Tampoco el cine, por mucho que se esfuerce, podrá competir con el teatro" (43). Buero subsequently highlights his view that drama is particularly well suited for prompting thought and learning in the spectator by claiming that,

"desterrar definitivamente al teatro ... sería ... como volver un poco a la edad de las cavernas, aun con ordenadores" (44).

As we have seen, Buero repeatedly asserts the positive value of tragedy. The learning process that tragedy provokes is integral to this positive value. "Lo trágico tiene, por consiguiente, un significado positivo; y lo tiene porque propone una mayor lucidez, porque somete a la reflexión renovada nuestros más hondos problemas" ("El sentido" 8). It is important now to consider the collaborative role that Buero perceives, as did Aristotle, that learning plays in tragic catharsis. Striking a very Aristotelian tone in "La tragedia," Buero describes catharsis in the following manner: "Admiradores del equilibrio físico y espiritual, por lo mismo que tanto les faltaba a veces, los griegos pensaban de continuo en la moderación—catarsis—de las pasiones" (66). Catharsis is a moderating force because it enables the spectator to recognize when and to what degree the emotions of fear and pity are appropriate in one's own life. Buero recognizes the central importance of catharsis in Aristotle's description of tragedy. Indeed, Buero equates catharsis with "la clave fundamental de la tragedia" (65). Buero also centers the positive value of tragedy in tragic catharsis. Aristotle argued against Plato that tragedy *improves* the spectator through catharsis. Buero holds the same view. "La catarsis no es ya descarga, sino mejora ... Pues, en definitiva, catarsis es lo mismo que interior perfeccionamiento" (67).

As we recall, Lear argues that when Aristotle used the term 'catharsis', he was referring to a purging of fear and pity made possible through recognizing that when tragic events occur, they do so in a rational, ordered world. Buero views catharsis—the result of recognizing our human limitations and errors—as 'interior perfeccionamiento'

because, aware of these limitations and errors, overcoming them becomes possible. For this reason, Buero views tragedy as one of the most effective means to prompt change for the better, both socially and personally. In "El sentido de mi teatro," Buero claims that, "la tragedia no sólo puede llegar a promover depuraciones catárticas, que por serlo ya son transformadoras, sino también una crítica inquietante, una ruptura en el sistema de opiniones que sociedades y hombres se forjan para permanecer tranquilos" (8). In this same essay, Buero summarizes his definition of tragedy in the following manner, which reveals the central role that recognition of our human limitations plays in Buero's concept of the tragedy of hope:

> La tragedia es un género abierto y no cerrado; que trata de estimular las fuerzas del hombre y no sus debilidades; que no afirma nada concluyente en cuanto a las humanas limitaciones sino que propone el encuentro con aquellas verdades o, al menos, aquellas búsquedas que podrían, tal vez, liberarnos de nuestras cegueras. (8)

Many critics focus on this aspect of Buero's tragedy of hope. According to Iniesta Galvañ, "la tragedia es, para Buero, el género más moral que existe, porque empuja al hombre a modificar el mundo" (36). Martha T. Halsey claims that Buero aims to give his plays "this 'positive tragic sense' whose purpose is to fortify or stimulate the spectators moral sense, not through discourses or sermons, but through its cathartic virtue" (*Antonio Buero Vallejo* 14). Carmen Rodríguez Santos reflects a similar thought, emphasizing that, for Buero, any attempt to modify the world must be founded in a recognition of 'la verdad': "[E]l teatro de Buero nos insta a buscar el ideal, a tratar de que nuestros sueños se cumplan. Pero no a partir de la alucinación" (201).

Doménech explains the relationship between the tragic hero's *anagnorisis* and catharsis in Buerian tragedy as follows: "[s]u *anagnórisis*,—descubrimiento por su parte de la verdad de quienes son—nos llevará a nuestra *katharsis*: descubrimiento de la verdad de quienes somos" ("Buero Vallejo" 117). It is noteworthy that the language that Doménech uses when describing the learning process that Buerian tragedy provokes takes on an existentialist tone. Instead of describing Buero's tragedies as showing the logical cause and effect relationships at play in the world, or how to respond admirably to misfortune, Doménech claims that his tragedies reveal to us the truth about who we are.[28] As we have seen, Buero certainly uses such language himself. Buero claims that tragedy, particularly those that end badly, "se trata, pues, de un pesimismo provisional por el que se pretenden trazar sobre bases más ciertas los caminos positivos del ser humano" ("La tragedia 75). Pedro Laín Entralgo, in his analysis of Buero's portrayal of human life in his tragedies, argues that, "[l]o mejor del hombre, aquello por lo que su existencia llega a ser digna de su esencia, es la serena conciencia de su limitación y un no morboso esfuerzo por superarla" (51). Laín Entralgo's claim that only through recognition of our limitations and aiming to surpass those limitations do we arrive at a complete existence echoes Sartre's distinction between being *en sois*, or blind to one's own limitations, versus being *pour sois*, aware of one's own limitations and therefore authentic, in *Being*

[28] It ought to be noted that this shift in language does not reflect a fundamental shift in the content or themes in modern tragedies themselves when compared with classic tragedies as much as it reflects a change in interpretation of these tragedies. An existentialist reading of classic tragedy is common today—Walter Kaufmann treats this subject extensively in *Tragedy and Philosophy*—even though the Greeks, obviously, would never have used the same terminology to describe the main themes of their works. Such a reading of classic tragedy is, in my opinion, perfectly valid and, as Buero's coalescing of Aristotelian and existential tragedy shows, the two share many points in common.

and Nothingness. The importance of leading an authentic existence, as we will see in the following chapter, is not only an integral part of Buero's theory of tragedy, it is a recurring theme in his drama. Feijoo observes that, "[e]sa voluntad del dramaturgo de enfrentar a sus espectadores con las circunstancias de la vida real ... es uno de los ejes centrales de toda su trayectoria" ("Antonio Buero Vallejo" 51). Indeed, Buero's view that tragedy forces the spectator to confront his or her limitations and the ugliness of life and thereby achieve a greater level of existential authenticity leads him to conclude in "La tragedia" that, far from pessimistic, tragedy is optimistic:

> Pues, la tragedia nos invita a aquella actitud vital que no teme enfrentarse con los mayores horrores y nos propone que adquiramos el arroyo suficiente para sacar de ellos una postura afirmativa. Nos propone *conservar el optimismo* sin negar ninguna negrura de la vida, en vez de propagar la peligrosa tontería de que el mundo es, a fin de cuentas, un valle de delicias. La tragedia propone la fundación del optimismo en la verdad y no en la mentira. (75)

The Unamunian Elements of Buero's Tragedy of Hope

In *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, Unamuno argues that, "[e]l pesimismo que protesta y se defiende, no puede decirse que sea tal pesimismo. Y desde luego no lo es, en rigor, el que reconoce que nada debe hundirse aunque se hunda todo" (298).[29] Unamuno's "pesimismo que protesta" sounds very much like the "pesimismo provisional

[29] All quotes from Unamuno in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, are from *Del sentimiento*.

por el que se pretenden trazar sobre bases más ciertas los caminos positivos del ser humano" that Buero attributes to the genre of tragedy. It is already apparent in what we have seen thus far that Buero's views on tragedy as well as on human nature are strikingly similar to Unamuno's views considered in the previous two chapters. Ricardo Doménech argues that. "[e]l unamuniano 'sentimiento trágico de la vida' late en todas las creaciones drámaticas de Buero," resulting from their "compartida visión trágica del mundo" ("Buero Vallejo" 116). Laín Entralgo agrees: "'Más, más y cada vez más ... ¡Sed de ser, sed de ser más!', grita Unamuno desde su personal modo de sentir el hecho de ser hombre. Repetidamente lo proclama el teatro de Buero Vallejo" (53).[30] The following chapter will examine in greater detail the omnipresence of Unamunian themes in Buero's tragedies, but first it will be useful to consider his great influence on Buero's theory of tragedy as well. While Aristotle's views on tragedy certainly influence Buero's theory, it cannot as easily be argued that Buero's tragedies represent an Aristotelian view of the world. Regarding Unamuno's influence, however, the theory and the content are equally subject. Buero himself recognizes the great influence that Unamuno had on his life and works: "[Unamuno es] uno de los más grandes maestros que he tenido" (qtd. in Johnston 340).[31] Halsey argues that in Buero's tragedy of hope, "there is basis for hope not only in the 'light', but moreover for the attainment of a more authentic form of existence which will result from the conflict between reason and faith" (*Antonio Buero Vallejo* 142). This section will focus on Unamuno's influence on Buero's tragedy of

[30] Laín Entralgo does not cite the quote from Unamuno. It can be found in *Del sentimiento* 92.
[31] Johnston finds this quote in Buero's conference on Unamuno that appeared in *Primer Acto* 58 (November 1964): 19-21.

hope in three main areas: the importance of existential authenticity derived from recognizing our limitations and the doubt that accompanies it; the vital hope that both authors claim flows from the faith-reason conflict; and the centrality of the 'hombre de carne y hueso' in their view of tragedy. Perhaps Unamuno himself best summarizes what would become Buero's concept of the tragedy of hope:

> No he querido callar lo que callan otros; he querido poner al desnudo, no ya mi alma, sino el alma humana ... Y hemos llegado al fondo del abismo, al irreconciliable conflicto entre la razón y el sentimiento vital ... hay que aceptar el conflicto como tal y vivir de él ... esa desesperación puede ser base de una vida vigorosa. (173)

The importance of existential authenticity appears several times in *Del Sentimiento*. Even though Unamuno repeatedly refers to reason and rational truths as "anti-vitales," he does not respect those who ignore reason and the uglier truths of human existence. "Y a todos nos falta algo; sólo que unos lo sienten y otros no. O hacen que no lo sienten, y entonces son unos hipócritas" (72). Unamuno laments the loss of his innocent faith, but he does not advocate denial of the truth or avoidance of life's difficult questions, which would amount to inauthenticity. Instead, Unamuno argues that, "[e]l remedio es considerarlo cara a cara, fija la mirada en la morada de la Esfinge" (96). However, attaining existential authenticity, for Unamuno as much as for Buero, involves doubting our faith, oftentimes painfully. As Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* argues, faith is different from knowledge. That which can be rationally proven is an object of knowledge, whereas objects of faith cannot, and therefore are subject to doubt. Therein

lies the intimate connection between faith and doubt described by Kierkegaard, Unamuno and Buero.

Buero not only recognizes Unamuno's tragic sense of life as an accurate way to view human existence, he also sees the conflict described in *Del sentimiento* at the heart of all tragedy. In "La tragedia," Buero argues that, "[l]as tragedias son, en esencia, expresiones de 'la fe que duda'" (77). Unamuno, with his characteristically exaggerated tone, asserts the same: "Es un trágico combate, es el fondo de la tragedia, el combate de la vida con la razón" (141). Buero argues that tragedy represents "la condición humana de la duda y la fe en lucha, en la que ellas mismas se apoyan" (77). Buero's description of the relationship between faith and doubt as a contradictory fusion of both hostility and mutual need echoes Unamuno's description of the conflict between the heart and the head: "[E]n el fondo del abismo se encuentran la desesperación sentimental y volitiva y el escepticismo racional frente a frente, y se abrazan como hermanos... un abrazo trágico" (156), which leads him to conclude that "fe, vida y razón se necesitan mutuamente" (161). Buero also shares Unamuno's Kierkegaardian view that true religion ought to be lived as a conflict. He reveals this view when considering the tragic suspicion, which he finds in Sophocles and Calderón, that it would be better never to have been born. Buero describes this anxiety as a "preocupación existencial, típicamente trágica, cuyo abismático sentido religioso asusta a aquellos timoratos para los que la Religión es un cómodo consuelo y no un conflicto" (84). The clear implication of this description is that tragedy will never be pleasing to those unwilling to confront honestly the most uncomfortable questions about human existence.

One Unamunian element missing from Buero's theory of the tragedy of hope, however, is the explicit and perpetual lament for the loss of blind faith. This difference leads Rodríguez Santos to conclude that Buero's "sentimiento trágico de la vida es, sin duda, muy fuerte. Pero no más fuerte que su sentimiento esperanzado de la vida, jamás basado en alucinaciones engañosas, sino en la verdad" (202). While this claim identifies a verifiable difference in tone between the two authors, it is important to note, as we will see shortly, that a "sentimiento trágico de la vida" should not be viewed as different from a "sentimiento esperanzado de la vida." In addition, as we have just seen, both Unamuno and Buero arrive at these "sentimientos" basing themselves on "la verdad" of reason, which leads to doubt. While Buero's tragedies continuously promote existential authenticity, they are also, as tragedies, an implicit lament for the loss of blind faith.[32] Moreover, in accord with Buero's argument that tragedy, by forcing us to recognize our limitations, promotes a valiant response, Unamuno also claims that embracing the tragic sense of life encourages heroism: "[L]a incertidumbre, la duda, el perpetuo combate con el misterio de nuestro final destino, la desesperación mental y la falta de sólido y estable fundamento dogmático, pueden ser base de moral" (295). Finally, while Unamuno recognizes and misses the comfort of simple faith—"Esa sed de vida eterna apáganla muchos, los sencillos sobre todo, en la fuente de la fe religiosa" (108)—we must remember that Unamuno's closing line to *Del sentimiento* encourages the opposite of comfortable, blind, and therefore inauthentic faith: "¡Y Dios no te dé paz y sí gloria!" (356).

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[32] One clear example, which we will consider in greater detail in the following chapter, is found in *En la ardiente oscuridad*. While Buero is clearly encouraging, through Ignacio,

Ida Molina, also detecting a greater 'hopelessness' in Unamuno's tragic view of life, distinguishes Buerian tragedy from Unamunian by referring to the former as more open and the latter as more closed. In a personal letter that Buero wrote to Molina on September 19, 1970, he does recognize a distinction between the two: "[F]rente al radicalismo existencial de Unamuno, mi modesta labor intentaba una 'corección hegeliana' y ... por eso, la tragedia era para mí más abierta y asimismo, más susceptible de afrontar aspectos concretos, y superables, de los problemas sociales" (122).[33] We must first note that Buero is only admitting a more hopeful view regarding social tragedy, of which Unamuno offered little. Regarding metaphysical themes, as the next chapter will show, Buero's views are even more intimately connected with Unamuno's. In a subsequent letter written to Molina on September 6, 1972, Buero clarifies his position and minimizes the difference between himself and Unamuno: "[C]onsidero ilusoria en última instancia la diferencia entre tragedia 'abierta' y 'cerrada' que nos ha servido operativamente para la comparación entre Unamuno y yo, pero que considerada a fondo, se disuelve: toda tragedia es abierta ... incluida la que nos parece cerrada" (123). This clarification is evidently consistent with Buero's claim in "La tragedia" that all tragedies, even the most seemingly hopeless, are not pessimistic.

As further evidence of the similarities between Unamuno and Buero, we must be reminded that Unamuno's "sentimiento trágico de la vida" is replete with a Buerian

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an honest recognition of our limitations, he also shows through the students, as they come to attain greater authenticity, that they are far less happy as a result.

[33] Molina's article explains in great detail what the 'corección hegeliana' entails. For the purposes of this argument, it is sufficient to recognize that Hegel's views are far more optimistic, indeed, as Molina points out, too optimistic for Buero. For this reason she places Buerian tragedy somewhere between Hegelian and Unamunian views of the world.

"sentimiento esperanzado de la vida." In *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno makes it clear that, while he may not attain unshakable faith, he desires eternal hope. "Y el alma, mi alma al menos, anhela ... eterno acercarse sin llegar nunca, inacabable anhelo, eterna esperanza que eternamente se renueva sin acabarse del todo nunca. ... No pongáis a la puerta de la Gloria, como a la del Infierno puso el Dante, el *Lasciate ogni Speranza*!" (290-91). As we saw in the previous chapter, Unamuno repeatedly claims in *Del sentimiento* that hope arises from the conflict between faith and reason. A couple of brief examples include the following: "la desesperación del sentimiento vital ha de fundar su esperanza" (156), and "de este abismo de desesperación puede surgir esperanza" (176). In his analysis of Don Quijote in the conclusion to *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno assigns a greater level of authenticity and value to this type of hope. "[E]s de la desesperación y sólo de ella de donde nace la esperanza heroica, la esperanza absurda, la esperanza loca" (350).

As we saw in the previous chapters, Unamuno calls this hope absurd and crazy because it is contradictory. He argues: "[H]ay que creer acaso en esa otra vida para merecerla, para conseguirla, o tal vez ni la merece ni la consigue el que no la anhela sobre la razón y, si fuere menester, hasta contra ella" (293). Buero echoes this line of thought. In an equally contradictory manner given that Buero admits, as we saw earlier, that he does not believe in a transcendental order, Buero claims that, in tragedy, the protagonists come to believe that they can overcome their fate and that, "el cielo no puede permanecer indiferente ante un movimiento de profunda y viva fe" (73). Tragic hope is not only contradictory; it is, by its very nature, stubborn and rebellious. This hope is stubborn because it persists in spite of all evidence to the contrary and in spite of all doubt. Laín Entralgo refers to Buerian tragic hope as "rebeldía esperanzada," which

he describes as, "la esperanza 'contra spem' ... Es trágica la esperanza cuando quienes la viven y manifiestan, sin imaginarla de modo concreto, profunda e indeliberadamente la sitúan más allá del fracaso y de la muerte" (54). The concept of rebellious hope is certainly Unamunian. Recognizing the "tragedia íntima del alma," Unamuno concludes that "[s]in embargo, sí, hay que anhelar [la otra vida], por absurda que nos parezca; es más, hay que creer en ella, de una manera o de otra, para vivir" (292). Finally, tragic hope is also characterized by its eternal renewal in the tragic cycle between faith and doubt. Just as Unamuno recognizes that, in the authentic being, this conflict will never end (168), Buero Vallejo also views this struggle as eternal, calling it a "condición permanente [de que] brota a su vez la permanente revitalización de toda fe ... y su pertinaz replantamiento en el alma del hombre como conflicto vivo y no cómo fórmula muerta" (77).

Unamuno reveals what he considers the "fórmula muerta": the absurdist view. He complains that the rationalists, "me dan raciocinios en prueba de lo absurda que es la creencia en la inmortalidad del alma; pero esos raciocinios no me hacen mella, pues son razones y nada más que razones, y no es de ellas de lo que se apacienta el corazón" (98). This view complements Buero's claim that there is no greater pessimism than to consider it certain that the world lacks any final meaning, which is the absurdist view (75). The absurdist view represents absolute doubt because it ceases to hope. While Unamuno clearly questions absolute faith, he also questions the opposite position, absolute doubt. He claims that skepticism towards either position is at the core of his existence: "El '¿y si hay?' y el '¿y si no hay?' son las bases de nuestra vida íntima" (168). Buero agrees, insisting that the tragedy of hope resides somewhere between absolute faith and absolute

doubt. There, attaining existential authenticity leads to the destruction of blind faith but does not permanently annihilate all hope, although hope will no longer be based on "la peligrosa tontería de que el mundo es, a fin de cuentas, un valle de delicias" (Buero, "La tragedia" 75). Buero Vallejo argues that tragedy is always somewhere between these two extremes, which he calls "la fe sin sombra de duda" and "la negación absoluta":

> Y del uno al otro no hay más que un trayecto en el que la esperanza trágica se da en mayor o menor grado, pero se da siempre. Parece no ser esperanza todavía en el polo mismo del arranque, como parece no serlo ya en el de llegada; pero al lado de este último late todavía el pálpito de la esperanza que postuló la afirmación que contiene, como junto al arranque vive la esperanza que, aun filosóficamente negada como sin fundamento, ha motivado la creación misma de la tragedia por la alarma de su posible falta. (76)

As his claim that, "pese a toda duda, creo y espero en el hombre," (Doménech, *El teatro* 28) reveals, Buero finds the foundation for hope in human beings and their possibilities. As we recall, Unamuno places at the center of all philosophy 'el hombre de carne y hueso' (58). Iniesta Galvañ, basing himself on Buero's tragedies as well as his theory, therefore argues that the Unamunian 'hombre de carne y hueso' is Buero's primary obsession: "Buero proclama, desde sus más tempranas obras, la que va a ser su principal obsesión: el hombre y la sociedad que la rodea" (319). This focus on the individual as he or she exists in the world is characteristic of all existentialist philosophy and certainly does not originate in Unamuno alone. Furthermore, existentialism was at its apex in Europe during the earlier years in which Buero wrote. Given this, various

sources of existential thought undoubtedly influenced Buero's thinking. Nevertheless, Unamuno was Spain's earliest voice for Kierkegaardian existentialism, which is the type—in contrast with the absurd view portrayed in Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus*, for example—that Buero follows. For this reason, Unamuno's influence on Buero's own existentialism cannot be understated and it is fair to assume that Buero's focus on human existence finds its origins in Unamuno's *Del sentimiento*. Buero himself alludes to this influence in his description of Unamuno, "que nos hizo sentir la realidad ardiente y problemática de nuestra vida concreta" (*O.C. II* 300, qtd. in Iniesta Galvañ 23).

Do Buero's tragedies really produce hope in the spectator?

Finally, and briefly, we must consider this very important question: Do Buero's tragedies really produce hope in the spectator as he claims? In one sense, the answer is immediately apparent. Given that the cathartic experience, which is said to renew tragic hope, is a subjective experience, this question can only be answered by those who watch or read a Buerian tragedy speaking only for him or herself. Nevertheless, this chapter will conclude with a consideration of *Esperar sin esperanza: El teatro de Antonio Buero Vallejo* (2002), Iniesta Galvañ's recent study, written after Buero's death in 1998. As the title suggests, this study argues that Buero's tragedies fail to offer the hope that Buero describes in his theory: "[A]firmamos que la persona de Buero y su producción literaria no dramática son radicalmente esperanzados; su teatro, no" (14). Iniesta Galvañ claims that he finds great value in Buero's drama for the existential authenticity that it promotes, asserting that his readers and spectators return to his tragedies time and again, "necesitados como estamos de fundar nuestra vida en la verdad y no en la mentira, por

amarga que sea ella" (44). But, based on the seemingly hopeless message contained in Buero's tragedies, which, it should be noted, all end in misfortune, Iniesta Galvañ finds it impossible to share his hope in mankind. "Desde la perspectiva concreta de cada una de sus obras no entrevemos el carácter abierto y esperanzado que, en el resto de sus escritos, afirma que posee su concepto de tragedia" (319-20). Iniesta Galvañ, in his argument against the possibility of finding any possible hope in Buero's tragedies, reminds us, "[p]ero Buero no es marxista ni deísta" (321). It is interesting that Iniesta Galvañ should point to these two qualities in particular given that, as we recall from the first chapter, George Steiner argues that the terms Christian tragedy and Marxist tragedy are oxymoronic since both views share at their end a utopic vision of personal or social salvation. Setting these two world views aside, however, Iniesta Galvañ also fails to find hope for the one thing that Buero claims he does believe in: 'el hombre de carne y hueso'. "Y no hemos encontrado en toda su dramaturgia auténticas bases en las que un hombre cabal pueda depositar su confianza última en las posibilidades humanas" (321).

In order to respond to Iniesta Galvañ's claims, we must first be reminded of the contradictory and rebellious nature of tragic hope. Laín Entralgo, who coins the phrase "rebeldía esperanzada," echoes Iniesta Galvañ's concerns. Referring to the Unamunian 'sed de ser más', Laín Entralgo asks: "[S]iendo así la condición humana, ¿puede ser razonable la esperanza de salir de esa radical menesterosidad?" (53). Laín Entralgo resolves this question, however, through his recognition that Buero's tragic hope is, as we have seen, contradictory, stubborn and rebellious precisely because it is not 'razonable'. Even Iniesta Galvañ wonders, in failing to find hope in Buero's tragedies: "Quizá nuestro error consista en una actitud extremadamente racionalista" (324). It seems that

Iniesta Galvañ, who appreciates the ugly truths of life that Buero's tragedies confront us with, has been carried to the position of extreme doubt, unable to find any hope. For this reason, Buero and Unamuno would probably agree that his inability to find hope in the tragic sense of life is indeed the result of leaning too heavily on 'la cabeza' and too little on 'el corazón'.

As the next section will show in greater detail, Buero insists that in any artistic work of integrity, the message is always best expressed implicitly. Tragedy too, therefore, must avoid an explicitly hopeful message or it will cease to be tragedy: "[L]a tragedia es positiva y no negativa. Pero cometeríamos un grave error suponiendo que su condición positiva debe mostrarnos siempre de manera explícita" (75). Buero claims that tragedy need not provide the answers or solutions to the conflicts it portrays but rather, that it should prompt the audience to find these answers on their own. Buero claims that even the most hopeless tragedies are, at their core, affirmative expressions of the possibilities of humankind which, through catharsis, restore hope in the spectator. But Buero also recognizes the subjective nature of catharsis: "La reacción ante [la catarsis] de cada espectador puede ser asimismo bien diferente, condicionada como está por la individual formación de cada cual. La acción catártica puede dejarnos pasivos o provocarnos el imperioso deseo de laborar" (67). The best response to Iniesta Galvañ's claims, therefore, is the initial one: everyone responds to tragedy differently. This difference in response to tragedy, it must be remembered, has its most famous example in Plato and Aristotle. Plato bans tragedy from his Republic because "it is able to corrupt even decent people, for that's surely an altogether terrible thing" (605c). Yet Aristotle sees opportunities for self-improvement arising from tragedy. Buero's theory of the

tragedy of hope shows that, while this may not be the result for every spectator, it is certainly what Buero intends.

The Development of Buero Vallejo's Theater

> [L]as obras de Buero Vallejo son asimismo—y *antes* que cualquier otra cosa—tragedias modernas... El unamuniano "sentimiento trágico de la vida" late en todas las creaciones dramáticas de Buero, desde su primer estreno hasta los más recientes. No hablo de coincidencias externas... sino de una compartida visión trágica del mundo. (Doménech, "Buero Vallejo" 116)

Antonio Buero Vallejo, unlike Unamuno, produced dramatic works that are not only considered in retrospect works of a highly talented author with great technical ability, they were received by the public as such and enjoyed great financial success beginning with his first appearance on the Spanish stage with *Historia de una escalera*, for which he won the "Lope de Vega" award, in 1949. As Ricardo Doménech argues in the previous citation, all of Buero's works should be considered, first and foremost, modern tragedies. Before we consider the development of Buero's theater as a whole, followed by a more detailed analysis of how his tragedy of hope takes form in two exemplary works, *En la ardiente oscuridad* and *La tejedora de sueños*, it will be useful to consider briefly the elements of Buero's early biography that most likely had an influence on his dramatic works.

Buero Vallejo's life was dramatically changed by the Civil War. At a young age, he had an interest in the arts; his first attempts at theater took the form of puppet shows represented for his family when he was only a boy. In his youth, however, Buero was most drawn to painting, which he pursued seriously at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando from 1934-1936 (Domenech, *El teatro* 11). When the war began, however, Buero left his studies to enlist on the Republican side as a medic. Buero served until the war was over, in 1939, at which point he was imprisoned and sentenced to death for "adhesión a la rebelión." This sentence was later commuted to a long prison sentence. His sentence continued to be reduced until, surprisingly, after six years Buero was given his freedom (Halsey, *Antonio Buero Vallejo* 15). Buero's time awaiting, first, completion of his death sentence, and later, the completion of his prison sentence, greatly influenced the formation of his views on life and human existence that are represented in his theater. He calls the various prisons he served time in his "universidades," claiming that "me formaron, y acaso los núcleos más consistentes de mi teatro posterior procedan de la experiencia y reflexión en ellas acumuladas" (*O.C. II* 309 qtd. in Iniesta Galvañ, 24). It is easy to imagine that Buero's insistence upon his tragedies encouraging hope for the seemingly impossible might be founded in the avoidance of a death sentence he saw carried out on his comrades.

At the beginning of the war, Buero Vallejo's father was executed. His family did not learn what happened to him until years later (Leyra, "Vida y estética" 16). Buero Vallejo refers to this incident as, "mi mayor tragedia familiar: la del asesinato, en la zona donde hice la guerra, del hombre sin culpa, recto y bueno que me engendró" (*O.C. II* 1177, qtd. in Iniesta Glavañ, 21). Ana María Leyra argues that "en sus obras, Buero

expresa la angustia y el dolor vividos ante aquellos acontecimientos inhumanos, convirtiendo por medio del arte las experiencias individuales en emociones comunicables" ("Vida y estética" 16). When he was released from prison in 1945 "at the age of twenty-nine, Buero evidently found it difficult to resume painting after the long period without practice. Profoundly disillusioned, he renounced his dream of becoming a painter" (Halsey, *Antonio Buero Vallejo* 15-16). Buero explains that, as early as 1939, "pensé que yo tendría que escribir, quizá porque la tremenda época en que vivimos iba ya dejando en mí un poso de experiencia personal que parecía requerir, más que la expresión pictórica, la literaria... El caso es que me puse a escribir teatro en 1946" (*O.C. II*, 291, qtd. in Iniesta Galvañ 24). In this year, Buero wrote his first and arguably one of his best dramas, *En la ardiente oscuridad*, thus marking a permanent transition in Buero's life from painting to the dramatic arts.

Unamuno's theater in comparison with the rest of his literary production is relatively little studied. Buero's theater, in contrast, is widely studied. There is far too much written on Buero's theater as a whole and on particular plays to mention here. Instead, my analysis will consider some of the most important Buero scholars. Luis Iglesias Feijoo and Mariano de Paco compiled the 1996 *Obras completas*, which contain all of Buero's plays except the last, *Misión al pueblo desierto*, which was written in 1997 and 1998. Ricardo Doménech, Martha Halsey, and Enrique Pajón Mecloy have also dedicated themselves to comprehensive studies of this author and his works. Pedro Laín Entralgo and Ana María Leyra have studied Buero extensively from a philosophical perspective, and in 1998, Leyra coordinated a collection of essays as well as a public conversation with Buero that focus on the philosophical dimensions of his work: *Antonio*

Buero Vallejo: Literatura y Filosofía. Pajón Mecloy and Joaquín Verdú de Gregorio study the symbolism of light and darkness in Buero's dramatic production. Many scholars focus on the social commentary of Buero's plays; among them are Barry Jordan and Juan Cruz Mendizábal. There are also several authors who have compared Buero to Unamuno in their studies, in addition to Feijoo and Doménech. Substantial contributions have been made by David Johnston, who compares Buero and Unamuno's treatment of history, Ida Molina, who, in addition to her own analysis, publishes several personal exchanges with Buero regarding Unamuno and Carmen Rodríguez Santos, who compares Buero to all Generation of '98 authors. Finally, it is important to mention a very recent study published by Antonio Iniesta Galvañ, *Esperar sin esperanza*. This study takes the not entirely uncommon stance that Buero's tragedies do not produce the hope he claims they do, and is for this reason intriguing. This study is most useful for the wide variety of commentaries from Buero himself that it takes into consideration. However, as a whole, this study is unconvincing in its arguments, as we will see in the analyses of two Buero tragedies to follow.

As previously noted, Doménech recognizes that thematically, Buero's plays are heavily influenced by Unamuno's *Del sentimiento trágico*. Doménech summarizes the greatest difference between these two authors in this way: "Buero ha encontrado una forma dramática que Unamuno no llegó a encontrar" ("Buero Vallejo" 117). This section will therefore focus on an analysis of the nature of that dramatic form. Doménech argues that the first ten years of post-war Spain produced little or no quality drama. "[E]ntre 1939 y 1949, el mejor teatro se publica o estrena fuera de España" (*El teatro* 18). He finds only one exception: "En estos difíciles y oscuros años de la escena española—y de

la vida española—Jardiel Poncela fue un antídoto eficaz," remembering how he and other young spectators applauded "tantas y tantas comedias suyas, de humor alegre y desenfadado, original e 'inverosímil'" (*El teatro* 22). While Buero Vallejo's first drama was *En la ardiente oscuridad*, written in 1946, his first appearance on the stage was with *Historia de una escalera* in 1949. Only months before, Jardiel Poncela's last work, *Los tigres escondidos en la alcoba*, made its debut. Doménech comments on the remarkable change in direction of the history of Spanish theater that occurred in those few months: "Se diría que uno y otro estreno señalan el final y el comienzo de dos períodos perfectamente diferenciados del teatro español contemporáneo. Con *Historia de una escalera* se acabaron las bromas" (*El teatro* 23).

One way in which Buero differs from Unamuno is that all of his dramatic works could reasonably be classified as tragedies (Doménech, "Buero Vallejo 116). While Buero did not call every drama he wrote a "tragedy," Doménech recognizes that, oftentimes, the genre assigned to a work by the author does little to reveal how a work ought to be classified: "[C]on frecuencia los subtítulos genéricos dados por los dramaturgos, en lugar de clarificar, vienen a oscurecerlo más" ("Buero Vallejo" 109). In his 1958 essay on this genre, "La tragedia," Buero argues that there exist many more tragedies than are labeled such due to the "timidez con que el calificativo de 'tragedia' se aplica, incluso en nuestros días, a multitud de obras que lo son por su contenido aunque su forma tenga muy poco que ver con la clásica" (63). He argues against the "preceptistas rigurosos [que] afirmaron que la palabra 'tragedia' sólo debía aplicarse a las obras del teatro helénico así bautizadas, o cualesquiera otras que se escribiesen dentro de sus moldes" (63). Buero maintains that modern tragedy can and often will be quite

different both formally and thematically from classic tragedy. "Los ingredientes patéticos, morales y religiosos que componen esa unidad estética a la que llamamos 'tragedia,' pueden poseer matices muy variados y agruparse en proporciones muy diversas" (67). Buero explains historically what has become of certain formal elements of classic tragedy rarely used in the same way today, attributing these changes to a shift in the tastes and thinking of the audience (81-82). Regarding the chorus, for example, Buero argues that "[c]uando el individualismo enseñorea de la historia como actitud vital, la tragedia pierde sus coros" (81). Showing a bit of timidity himself, however, in "El sentido de mi teatro," Buero claims the following regarding his own plays: "[S]i son tragedias lo son por su último sentido, no por su forma" (8). This chapter will argue that Buero's plays are indeed tragedies in form as well as in their "último sentido."

There is some disagreement among Buerian critics regarding the extent to which Buero's theater changed over the more than fifty years within which he wrote thirty plays. As the title to the final section of his introduction, "1946 – 1950: Exponente de todo su teatro" suggests, Iniesta Glavañ maintains that Buero's theater, both thematically and stylistically, changed little over the course of his career. "[C]reemos que en esas primeras obras está contenido todo el Buero posterior, sin que ello signifique, por supuesto, que los cuarenta y cinco años restantes sean una monótona repetición de sus primeras obras" (47). Doménech also argues that Buero's first written drama, *En la ardiente oscuridad*, "viene a ser como un centro motor, del que parten—y al que regresan—las posteriores y sucesivas *exploraciones* del dramaturgo" (*El teatro* 54, Doménech's emphasis). Doménech continues: "Lo que este teatro quiere comunicarnos acerca del hombre y del mundo está básicamente enunciado o esbozado en su primer

drama" (54). Luis Iglesias Feijoo, however, argues that Doménech's claim is excessive. "Sería erróneo, con todo, pensar que sus obras son meras repeticiones de los mismos temas; aunque es muy claro que, cuando comienza a escribir, el autor tiene ya un pensamiento perfectamente definido" (*La trayectoria* 56). He sees clear formal progress in Buero's theater. "[L]a evolución incesante de la dramaturgia bueriana ... superó también el modelo del realismo simbólico integrándolo en propuestas cada vez más dinámicas ... por la vía del retablo histórico—iniciada en 1958 con *Un soñador para un pueblo*" ("Teatro" 39).

Feijoo recognizes, as do most critics, that all of Buero's plays express both a socio-political and a metaphysical commentary.[34] The development that Feijoo recognizes in Buero's theater is therefore more formal than thematic in nature. In their introduction to the 1994 edition of Buero's *Obras completas*, Feijoo and Mariano de Paco conclude that Buero's theater, "desde el principio estaba movida por propósitos que no variarán a lo largo del tiempo. Unidad en lo profundo y variedad en el desarrollo pudieran servir de notas caracterizadoras" (XV). Feijoo argues that, through stylistic perfection and innovative "audacias formales"—such as including a narrator on stage (*El tragaluz*) or forcing the audience to experience one particular character's point of view (*El sueño de la razón*)—, Buero is better able to express these two recurring themes: "[P]arece claro que la fusión de las dos dimensiones alcanza mayor perfección en las

[34] In addition to Feijoo, many of the most highly regarded Buero critics, such as Martha T. Halsey, Ricardo Doménech, Enrique Pajón Mecloy and Mariano de Paco recognize the fusion of the political and the metaphysical in Buero's plays. As we will see in the next section, Buero's argument that any social commentary expressed in a play must be implicit and therefore must be combined with a more universal commentary on the

obras que se inician a partir de [1958] ... ahora va a superar incluso el marco formal en el que se había instalado, el del realismo ibseniano, en favor de estructuras más abiertas y complejas" (39). I agree with Feijoo that Buero did indeed become more boldly experimental throughout the course of his literary career. It is, however, important to recognize that Buero's most unique and experimental contribution to modern drama, his "immersion effect," which will be discussed in greater length shortly, was used in his first drama. It is also quite clear that all of Buero's plays share certain recurring themes, the "unamuniano 'sentimiento trágico de la vida' [que] late en todas las creaciones de Buero" to which Doménech refers ("Buero Vallejo" 116). As Iniesta Galvañ argues, "[c]iertamente, 'libertad' y 'luz'—verdad, en suma—son los temas que de forma obsesiva presidirán en adelante su discurso profesional y humano, manteniendo su teatro 'fiel al impulso que lo inició'" (25).

Iniesta Galvañ analyzes the difficulty inherent in trying to divide Buero Vallejo's dramatic production as a whole into various movements, tendencies or stages. This stems largely from the consistency with which Buero has represented one overarching theme, the human struggle between necessary adversity and free will, through one genre, tragic drama (48). Nevertheless, Iniesta Galvañ, drawing somewhat inconsistently from an assortment of many highly regarded Buero scholars, attempts to divide Buero's plays into five main tendencies, what he calls "vías dramáticas": realist, symbolic, of fiction, historic and political (319).[35] My analysis regards such a division as both arbitrary and

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human condition reveals how and why Buero's plays, to varying degrees, contain a combination of the political and the philosophical.

[35] For this, Iniesta Glavañ refers to the studies of Ricardo Doménech, Ricard Salvat, Enrique Pajón Mecloy and Mariano de Paco.

misleading. Doménech argues that Buero's works are primarily representative of symbolic realism. "Buero tiene frente a él el simbolismo y el (neor)realismo – él opta por lo más difícil: una combinación, lo que él llama 'un realismo simbólico'" (" Buero Vallejo" 117). Following Doménech, I also consider symbolic realism the predominant formal approach in all of Buero's plays instead of classifying certain plays as realist and others as symbolic as does Iniesta Galvañ. Given that all of Buero's dramas are, in the strictest sense, fictional, I will not analyze "dramas de ficción" as a separate type either. In addition, my analysis will not treat political drama as a separate type; rather, I will analyze the confluence of both political and metaphysical *themes* in all of his plays. My analysis does, however, concur with Iniesta Galvañ in recognizing a group of Buero's plays that can be considered a separate type: his historic dramas. These dramas use actual historical characters and settings, such as Goya in *El sueño de la razón*, Velásquez in *Las Meninas*, Larra in *La detonación* or even fictional characters in a concrete historical setting, such as post-war Spain in *El tragaluz*. It is important to note, however, that these plays, like all of Buero's plays, are first and foremost tragedies that use symbolic realism to present a combination of both political and metaphysical themes.

While Buero employs the use of symbols to add greater depth to the meaning of his plays, the language that he uses is realistic; it is the simple, common language used by everyday people. Doménech describes it as, "lenguaje sencillo, de fácil comunicación con el espectador, aun siendo, como ciertamente es, continente de una problemática rica y compleja" (*El teatro* 42). This use of simple language makes Buero's plays quite different from more purely symbolic dramas like those of, for example, Lorca. Doménech argues that, given the "mito Lorca" that reigned in his early years as a

dramatist, Buero had no choice but to either simply repeat Lorca's forms or to consciously go against them, which also meant "ir en contra la moda" (*El teatro* 35-36). The simplicity of Buero's language also makes his dramas highly accessible, which is, as we recall, a great advantage that Buero's drama has over Unamuno's. Feijoo attributes Buero's symbolic realism to the influence of Ibsen. "La propuesta de un realismo simbólico de claro alcance social y combativo que el noruego había formulado ... fue la que más atrajo al dramaturgo español" ("Antonio Buero Vallejo" 22). Doménech also argues that "cabe señalar que Buero Vallejo no es tanto un *innovador*, como sí ... un *continuador*, y que sus más importantes hallazgos formales nacen como resultado de un debate previo ... con formas dramáticas preexistentes" (*El teatro* 34).

While Buero does follow preexisting dramatic forms to a large extent, it is important to consider briefly now the highly original immersion effects that Buero successfully uses in his plays.[36] Some of the most notable immersion effects occur in *En la ardiente oscuridad*, when all lights are turned off and the theater is left in complete darkness so that the spectator may experience the protagonists' blindness; in *El sueño de la razón,* where the words of other characters cannot be heard when Goya is on the stage, so that the spectator may experience Goya's deafness with him; and in *La fundación*, where the stage props change from scene to scene in order to reflect the way that the delusional Tomás perceives his world, slowly revealing that a pleasant dorm room is in reality a jail cell. Doménech argues that "[e]stos *efectos de inmersión*, cuya influencia

[36] Iniesta Galvañ notes that these effects are referred to differently by different scholars. Buero himself referrs to them as "efectos de interiorización," Feijoo calls them "efectos en primera persona" and Doménech, "efectos de inmersión" (32). Doménech's term is most widely used in Buerian criticism and, therefore, I will use it in this study as well.

difícilmente cabe predecir, constituyen, desde luego, la aportación técnica—*artística*—más original del teatro de Buero, y una de las más originales de todo el teatro español del siglo XX" (*El teatro* 51). Doménech also points out that, while many compare Buero's theater with Brecht's, his immersion effects represent what most distinguishes Buero from the German dramatist who, in contrast, employs "efectos de distanciación": the purpose of the immersion efects are, "en vez de alejar al espectador, introducirle completamente en el mundo de los personajes" (*El teatro* 51). Feijoo argues that, in using these immersion effects, Buero transcends "el aparente objetivismo del teatro, el cual se venía considerando erróneamente como una ley férrea e insuperable" ("Antonio Buero Vallejo" 40). Feijoo also recognizes the integral role that these immersion effects have in the overall effect of Buero's drama. "Esas audacias formales ... no eran gratuitos experimentos para alardear de renovación superficial sino intentos de transmitir estratos profundos de la subjetividad de sus protagonistas" (40). Since the main goal of tragedy, according to Aristotle, is to prompt fear and pity in the spectator through identification with the suffering of the characters, Buero's immersion effects directly contribute to the effectiveness of his plays as tragedies by heightening the extent to which the spectator subjectively, and therefore emotionally, experiences the characters' downfall.

Ana María Leyra describes Buero Vallejo as a "dramaturgo que siempre ronda la dimensión filosófica en sus obras ... manteniendo un diálogo constante con los acontecimientos históricos y con las transformaciones culturales" ("Prólogo" 8). It will be useful now to consider briefly the confluence of political and metaphysical themes in Buerian tragedy as a whole. We will see in much greater detail how these two themes interconnect specifically in the analyses of *En la ardiente oscuridad* and *La tejedora de*

sueños in the following chapter. Pedro Laín Entralgo identifies three main types of human "deficiency" in life and in tragedy: physical, social or ontological. He then argues that "[e]n sus muy diversas formas—ceguera, sordera, mudez, locura ocasional o permanente, opresión social, marginación, tortura...—ha escenificado Buero Vallejo esa triple deficiencia. En unos casos, mostrando su realidad o aludiendo a ella; en otros convirtiéndola en símbolo de la radical menesterosidad de la vida humana" (51). Some of the deficiencies that Laín Entralgo mentions are socio-political, while others are more metaphysical and, as he states, in many cases Buero symbolizes both types of deficiency through a third type: physical handicaps. Doménech agrees that in Buero's theater, "[e]l número de [las taras físicas] es demasiado elevado para ser casual," highlighting their metaphysical symbolism by concluding that "las taras físicas se orientan hacia una peculiar revelación de la soledad trágica del individuo" (65-66). According to Buero, there must always be present a more universal and therefore oftentimes metaphysical theme in any drama that is to be called a tragedy. In "La tragedia," he argues that an exclusively socio-political drama is antithetical to tragedy: "Si ante una obra de tema social de nuestros días el espectador sólo experimenta deseos de actuación inmediata y no se plantea—o siente—con renovada viveza el problema del hombre y de su destino, no es una tragedia lo que está viendo" (67-68). For Buero, combining political and metaphysical themes is natural to tragedy.[37] As we recall, Buero attributes a moral function to tragedy, which is the encouragement of self-improvement on both a personal

[37] It ought to be noted that, as we saw in the previous chapter, Unamuno's tragedies, while having some traces of political commentary to be found—most evidently in *El otro*—, focused almost exclusively on metaphysical or ontological themes. Buero's

and a societal level. For this reason, he describes the hope derived from tragic catharsis as double as well: "la esperanza en la justificación metafísica del mundo y la esperanza en la solución terrenal de los dolores humanos" (76).

While the political commentary found in Buero's works can often be interpreted as a direct statement about his contemporary Spain, it must be emphasized that the commentary is presented as universal. Feijoo argues that "su obra est[á] íntimamente vinculada a la vida, española en primer término, pero universal en definitiva, porque es del hombre en general de quien habla en escena, aunque para expresarse [ha elegido] a menudo las circunstancias específicas de la concreta realidad española" ("Anotnio Buero Vallejo" 37). Or, as Buero describes it, his tragedies search for, "caminos de la universalidad a la manera española" ("El sentido" 9). In "La tragedia," Buero argues against using theater for overly explicit social commentary, what he calls "teatro de propaganda," which is "tan fugaz como un cartel publicitario" (67). Buero argues that the artistic integrity of a work is dependent upon avoiding such explicit didacticism. Regarding the particular power of tragedy to elevate the spectator, he claims it does so, "no por explícitas consideraciones ni moralejas ... sino por la fuerza ejemplar del argumento y sus pasiones ... por directa impresión estética y no discursiva ...[;] puede expresarlo todo sin decir nada" (67). Many years later, in 1996, Buero Vallejo continued to insist upon the importance of an implicit message in a public conversation with Santos Sanz Villanueva: "[L]a eficacia y la eficiencia artística de una obra que pretende ser arte suele estar más siempre en lo implícito y en lo indirecto que no en lo directo" (45). The

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drama, in contrast, maintains a greater equilibrium of political and metaphysical themes, with some dramas being more political and others, more metaphysical.

importance that Buero gives to the universality of the political themes represented in tragedy is intimately connected to the importance he gives presenting the drama's message implicitly: they are two sides of the same coin. A specific political message about a concrete society expressed through a more general and universal commentary about human beings and their society is by its very nature implicit and indirect. It must also be noted that Buero's tendency towards indirect social criticism also enabled his plays to pass the censors of Franco's Spain. Buero's successful cloaking of social criticism is often referred to as *posibilismo*; Buero wrote dramas that were "possible," that could actually be represented on the stage.[38] Doménech reminds us, however, that Buero did not insist upon the implicit and indirect just so that his plays might pass the censors. "Lo implícito es un valor en sí, y aún más: para Buero es una *conditio sine qua non* de toda verdadera obra de arte, cualesquiera que sean las circunstancias del medio social e histórico en que se produce" (*El teatro* 31). As we will see with two specific tragedies in the following chapter, Buero's political and metaphysical messages are indeed presented in universal terms, often through symbolism, in a manner that requires the spectator's participation in interpreting the events at hand. Due to this emphasis on the implicit, Buero's theater is far more accessible and relevant to a much larger group of possible spectators, which explains his success in the theater when compared with Unamuno.

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[38] Not all of Buero's plays passed Franco's censors, most notably, *La doble historia del Dr. Valmy*, in which symbolic realism of state torture of political disidence was

considered too critical of Franco's dictatorship.

Chapter 5: The Tragedies of Antonio Buero Vallejo

Buero Vallejo wrote thirty plays over fifty-three years. For this reason, any analysis of Buero's drama that only considers two of his plays is necessarily incomplete. However, the intention of my analysis is to delineate through the detailed analysis of two plays, first, specific examples of Buero's techniques as a dramatist; second, how he is able to follow the Aristotelian requirements for tragedy explained in the *Poetics* in a way that is successful for a modern audience; and finally, the ubiquity of themes from *Del sentimiento trágico* in these plays. The focus on these aspects of Buero's drama serves the larger purpose of this dissertation to show that tragedy is indeed possible in the modern world and that the hope/doubt conflict described by Unamuno reveals one thematic area in which modern tragedy can be found. Among Buero's most famous and well-received dramas are *En la ardiente oscuridad* (1946), *Historia de una escalera* (1948), *La tejedora de sueños* (1951), *Las Meninas* (1960), *El tragaluz* (1967), *El sueño de la razón* (1969) and *La fundación* (1973). All of these plays portray a mix of metaphysical and social themes, however, in *En la ardiente oscuridad* and *La tejedora de sueños*, the metaphysical, and more importantly, Unamunian themes play a much greater part than in the other plays mentioned, which are by and large considered social plays. Consequently, these two dramas serve the purposes of my analysis best.

En la ardiente oscuridad: Drama en tres actos (1946)

Iniesta Galvañ tells us that Buero, "en agosto de 1946, apenas cinco meses después de su salida de prisión, escribe, en una semana, la primera versión de [*En la*

ardiente oscuridad]" (125). However, this play, which was originally conceived as a novel, did not see the stage until December 1, 1950, in the Teatro Nacional María Guerrero in Madrid (Iniesta Galvañ 125). Buero tells us in his commentary written for Alfil's 1951 publication of this play that during the four years between his first draft and its debut, "[r]etoqué a fondo su diálogo; modifiqué algunas escenas y el desenlace; acentué la significación coral de los estudiantes y suprimí un 'conserje' innecesario; reduje a dos los tres decorados en un principio concebidos y añadí algún efecto esencial," which Feijoo tells us was Buero's first use of the 'immersion effects' discussed previously (qtd. in *La trayectoria* 55).[39] In 1949, Buero submitted this play, along with *Historia de una escalera*, for the Lope de Vega award. As we know, *Historia de una escalera* won the award and was therefore represented on the Spanish stage first. However, Iniesta Galvañ tells us that Buero much preferred *En la ardiente oscuridad*. "[C]incuenta años después Buero seguirá estando en desacuerdo con aquel Tribunal que consideró superior *Historia de una escalera* a *En la ardiente oscuridad*" (25).

This drama tells the story of an educational center for blind adolescents where they are encouraged to do many things previously considered beyond their capacities, such as participate in a variety of sports and walk without their canes. The students live a contented and optimistic existence until Ignacio, a new blind student at the center, arrives. Ignacio is consumed with anguish caused by the recognition of the limitations that his blindness imposes upon him. It is apparent from the beginning that Ignacio will not adopt the other students' cheery optimism, which he describes as "absurdamente feliz" (81). Instead of desiring more attainable goals, such as walking through the center

[39] Feijoo finds this quote in "Comentario." *En la ardiente oscuridad*. Madrid: Alfil, 1951.

without his cane, Ignacio desires the seemingly unattainable: to see. After the passage of a month, in the second act, it is clear that Ignacio has had an influence on his peers who now care much less about their personal appearance and follow Ignacio around like disciples. Ignacio's impact on the others causes great concern for the center's leaders—don Pablo, a blind man, and doña Pepita, his wife and one of only two seeing characters in the play—and for Carlos, the natural leader among the students and a devoted follower of the school's can-do "moral de acero." During the second act, the ideological rivalry between Carlos and Ignacio clearly defines itself, and by the end of the second act, this rivalry evolves into a battle for Juana, Carlos' girlfriend, who shows great sympathy for Ignacio. In the third act, motivated by don Pablo's desperate desire to get rid of Ignacio—and perhaps even more so by Ignacio's own provocations regarding Juana—Carlos murders him in the fields outside the school. Carlos makes Ignacio's death look like an accident or possible suicide. The students quickly explain Ignacio's death as the result of his attempting, in secret, to participate in the sports he refused to try in the presence of others. After his death, the very friends who idolized Ignacio seem relieved to abandon his agonizing way of perceiving the world, as they return without delay to the school's far more pleasant, while less authentic, "moral de acero." Carlos continues to have problems, however, as in the penultimate scene doña Pepita reveals to Carlos that she saw him through the window drag a dead Ignacio up the slide and then push him off, reminding him that "[s]iempre olvidamos la vista ajena" (125). Doña Pepita's clear and easy access to the truth, afforded to her by her sight, seems to be the final blow to Carlos' already waning confidence in the limitless possibilities facing the blind. Doña Pepita warns him that "usted no ha vencido, Carlos; acuérdese de lo que le digo... Usted no ha

vencido" (125). The play ends with the revelation of Carlos' conversion to Ignacio's anguished ideology as he, alone on the stage, echoes almost word for word Ignacio's desire to see "las estrellas con todo su esplendor... al alcance de nuestra vista..., ¡si la tuviéramos!" (126).

Clearly a main theme of *En la ardiente oscuridad* concerns the question of authenticity that was reflected in Buero's assertion that tragedy prompts the spectator to hope to surpass his or her limitations, "sin negar ninguna negrura de la vida" ("La tragedia" 75). At the same time, the seeming impossibility of surpassing one's limitation, symbolized in this play by Ignacio's desire to see, leads to the anguished Unamunian struggle between faith and doubt. Unamuno's *Del sentimiento trágico* is a constant presence in this play. A connection can be found even in its title, *En la ardiente oscuridad*, when we consider Buero's description of Unamuno, "que nos hizo sentir la realidad ardiente y problemática de nuestra vida concreta" (*O.C. II* 300 qtd. in Iniesta Galvañ 23). Feijoo's analysis, by his own admission incomplete, gives more consideration to the Unamunian elements that abound in this play than other critics. He tells us that "[e]s preciso indicar ya la gran deuda de Buero hacia Unamuno, que está al trasfondo de toda la obra" (59).[40] Feijoo comments on the obvious relationship between this play and Unamuno's *La venda*, which, as we recall, also uses blindness as a symbol of failure to recognize reason or the truth. In accordance with don Pedro's argument in *La venda* that "[e]l que a manos de la verdad muere, bien muerto está" (224), Feijoo argues that "[e]sto es exactamente lo que le sucede al Ignacio de la obra de Buero" (72).

[40] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from Feijoo in this chapter are taken from *La trayectoria*.

Given the centrality of Unamunian themes in this work and their importance in Buero's theory of modern tragedy, this study will focus first on an analysis of these themes: the struggle between hope and doubt involved in achieving existential authenticity, the role of other people both in forcing us to recognize our limitations, as well in giving our lives meaning through love and compassion and finally, how the faith/doubt conflict and the role of "the other" are represented in the confrontation of two partial or incomplete truths in this play. Following the analysis of the Unamunian nature of these themes and how they are presented to us in Buero's play, this section will continue with a brief consideration of the possible socio-political interpretations of this play, some reflections on whether or not this play does indeed offer the hope that Buero claims it does and, finally, an examination of its technical merits and the extent to which it follows the Aristotelian requirements for tragedy.

Doménech argues that "*En la ardiente oscuridad* pone de relieve, asimismo, una preocupación básica en todo el teatro de Buero: ... *la tragedia del individuo*" (64).[41] The primary conflict reflected in this play is a personal one that plays out within the individual; it is the struggle to abandon an often comforting self-deceit in order to exist more authentically and attain a more noble hope to surpass one's own limitations, in spite of the constant doubt that a rational, authentic existence entails. As we will see, the confrontation between Carlos and Ignacio can be considered—as indeed it was by Buero himself (Feijoo 83)—representative of the personal struggles within one individual. That said, Carlos and Ignacio are complete and well developed characters in themselves,

[41] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from Doménech in this chapter are taken from *El teatro*.

realistically representing the many complexities of individual human beings. Therefore, for now, I will focus on the conflict between these two characters as separate individuals, as it appears in this drama, while keeping in mind that on another level one might find the arguments represented by Carlos and Ignacio co-existing within oneself.

The ideological struggle between Ignacio and Carlos is based upon Ignacio's pursuit of existential authenticity and his hope for the seemingly impossible in contrast with Carlos' desire to live a peaceful life, which involves denial of his own blindness. Carlos' denial is nothing more than a reflection of the school's philosophy. Iniesta Galvañ tells us that "el fallo [de la institución], finalmente, está en la mentira. Por esto Buero hace de ello una tragedia" (127). Buero Vallejo makes the inauthenticity of the school clear from the beginning. Through his stage directions, which characteristically give the reader a wealth of background information that might not always be apparent to the spectator, Buero tells us the following about the school: "*La ilusión de normalidad es, con frecuencia, completa, y el espectador acabaría por olvidar la desgracia física que los aqueja, si no fuese por un detalle irreductible, ... : estas gentes nunca se enfrentan con la cara de su interlocutor*" (73-74). Not only does Buero refer to the normalcy of the students as an illusion, he also alludes to their inability to confront their own limitations through the *detalle irreductible*.

The entire first act serves to develop the students' inauthenticity. In the opening scene, Miguel, one of the students "*que lleva gafas oscuras porque sabe por experiencia que su vivacidad es penosa cuando las personas que ven la contrastan con sus ojos muertos*" (74), returns from a trip. When his friends ask how it went, Miguel responds: "Lo he pasado formidable ... Es mucha calle la calle, amigos. Aquí se respira" (75). In

the center, the students are able to walk about without their canes because they have memorized the grounds and the positioning of the furniture, and no one ever changes this layout. Miguel's description of *la calle* creates a sharp contrast between the real world, where things are constantly changing and therefore more difficult for a blind person to move around in without their cane, and the artificial world of the school. The falsehood of the school also reveals itself in the euphemistic terms *videntes* and *invidentes* used by don Pablo and his students. The connotation of *vidente* as one being able to see more than is readily apparent also draws attention to the symbolism of light and sight in this play, shortly to be discussed in greater detail. Feijoo recognizes that the first act is largely filled with seemingly trivial scenes but explains that "todo ha sido dispuesto por el autor para sugerir, por medio de un lenguaje convencional, la profunda artificialidad del ambiente del centro" (58).

In contrast with Ignacio's father's amazement at the many accomplishments of the school, Buero's stage directions in the first act repeatedly remind the reader, lest we forget, of the students' blindness. As his father leaves, "*mira a todos con ojos húmedos, que ellos no pueden ver*" as he wonders whether or not to, "*consultar a* don Pablo *con una perruna mirada que se pierde en el aire*" (80). Buero also tells us that, while they are walking without a cane, "*Juana y Elisa se pasean torpemente en primer término*" (86). If the spectator has failed to notice what Buero wishes to convey in his stage directions, Ignacio does not delay in spelling it out clearly to Juana and, therefore, to the audience. "Tu optimismo y tu ceguera son iguales" (90). In a very Unamunian fashion, he argues: "Que no tenéis derecho a vivir, porque os empañáis en no sufrir; porque os negáis a enfrentaros con vuestra tragedia" (89). As we recall, Unamuno considers

confrontation with our human tragedy essential to life, so much so that he could not imagine a desirable afterlife in which this tragedy were absent: "[S]i allí no queda algo de la tragedia íntima del alma, ¿qué vida es esa?" (291). Buero makes clear throughout the play that maintaining "*la ilusión de normalidad*" requires a concerted effort towards collective self-deceit. Iniesta Galvañ connects this effort to the center's "moral de acero." "La moral de acero es imprescindible, sobre todo, para negar lo evidente: que son ciegos" (144). Doménech implies that this self-deceit is motivated by cowardice. He claims that Carlos, "mal encubre la duda y el escepticismo ... presiente que más allá está el vacío: las tinieblas, la verdad trágica de su condición, que él no se considera capaz de afrontar y de asumir" (57). Buero himself implies in the third act, through Elisa's amazement at his refusal to admit that Ignacio is stealing Juana from him, that Carlos' inability to confront the uglier truths of reality is motivated by fear: "Me explico tu falta de valor para reconocer los hechos" (110).

From the play's beginning, Ignacio stands in sharp contrast with the others as the only authentic student among the blind. He introduces himself: "Yo... soy un pobre ciego" (76). Unlike the other students, Ignacio refuses to give up his cane, explaining, "soy algo torpe para andar sin él" (81). Throughout the play, the tap-tap of Ignacio's cane is not only a constant reminder of his blindness, but in contrast with the others, it is also a reminder of his refusal to deceive himself into believing that he can do everything a seeing person can. Ignacio is surprised and dismayed by the schools inauthenticity: "Estáis envenenados de alegría. Y no era eso lo que pensaba encontrar aquí ... Pero sois monótonos y tristes sin saberlo" (88). The only other character in the play to honestly recognize the students' blindness is Ignacio's father, who, like doña Pepita, is also a

vidente: "Pero todos esos chicos—¡pobrecillos!—son ciegos. ¡No ven nada!" (79). In contrast with Ignacio, the students could be said to be doubly blind. Not only are they physically blind, they are also blind to the realities of their condition. While Carlos is clearly doña Pepita's preferred student throughout the play—"*el estudiante es para ella el alumno predilecto de la casa*," (102)—her final exchange with him, filled with the authority of her ability to see, recognizes Ignacio's superiority in honestly confronting his own limitations. She tells Carlos that he acted, "sin tener la precaución de pensar en los ojos de los demás. Siempre olvidamos la vista ajena. Sólo Ignacio pensaba en ella" (125).

Feijoo agrees that the students and don Pablo are, "doblemente ciegos, porque carecen de la visión interior de Ignacio" (77). As we have seen, Ignacio's "visión interior" is his ability to honestly recognize his own limitations. For this, on one level, Ignacio does not suffer the same blindness as his peers. But Ignacio is still blind. He argues that "[p]uede que esté ... anormal. Todos lo estamos" (82). With this line Buero alerts the reader and spectator to another layer of symbolism in blindness: in the sense that no one can know for certain the purpose or finality of their existence, we are all blind. By and large, most critics agree with this interpretation of blindness in *En la ardiente oscuridad*. Doménech tells us that "[t]odos somos 'ciegos,' es decir, somos imperfectos, carecemos de libertad suficiente para comprender el misterio de nuestro ser y de nuestro destino en el mundo" (63). Pajón Mecloy shares a similar view: "Ignacio quiere el ver como un apoyo, como una afirmación de sí mismo; quiere alcanzar las estrellas, apoderarse de la belleza para dar sentido y valor a su propio ser" (588). Ana María Leyra points out that blindness is a recurring symbol of lacking higher

understanding in tragedy dating back to the Greeks: "Como en Sófocles, ver y no ver pueden representar saber y no saber e incluso querer saber y no querer saber" ("Vida y estética" 21). Feijoo connects the symbolism of light with Buero's concern for recognizing and hoping to surpass one's limitations: "[L]a visión que anhela Ignacio debe ser relacionada con el vencimiento de unos límites que actualmente parecen insuperables o que algunos, Carlos, considerarían definitivamente insuperables" (72). We must remember that Buero uses physical handicaps repeatedly in his drama precisely because he considers them meaningful symbols of the human limitations that we all share: "[T]oda limitación física tiene literaria y dramáticamente grandes posibilidades de carácter simbólico ... alude muy claramente a cualquier tipo de limitación, enajenación o frustración o falta de desarrollo del hombre en otros terrenos" (qtd. in Feijoo, *La trayectoria* 69).[42]

The symbolism of light and blindness, it must be noted, is multi-layered and rich; for this very reason Buero chose to employ this physical disability repeatedly throughout his dramatic production. Light and darkness in this play is often connected to Plato's cave analogy. By this account, most of us live in the darkness of the cave, able to perceive only the shadows of images—the truth, reality—reflected on the walls by the light outside. In Feijoo's study of this play, he notes a comparison of *En la ardiente oscuridad* with Plato's cave in Halsey, Pajón Mecloy, Laín Entralgo and Joaquín Verdú de Gregorio (82). Pajón Mecloy, a critic who, it should be noted, is himself blind, discusses the symbolism of light and darkness as associated not only with Plato's cave

[42] Feijoo finds this quote in Antonio Rodríguez de las Heras. "Calidad en el teatro español actual: Antonio Buero Vallejo y ...." *Faro de Vigo*, Vigo (October 19, 1968).

analogy but also with our ability to confront our own mortality: "Viven los hombres en la plena oscuridad, ciegos que parecen ignorar incluso su propia ceguera, mortales que desconocen la muerte" (573). The Unamunian tone of this description cannot be ignored and it also brings to mind Unamuno's own use of light imagery as symbolic of faith in immortality in *Del sentimiento*: "De lo hondo de esa congoja, del abismo del sentimiento de nuestra mortalidad, se sale a la luz de otro cielo, como de lo hondo del infierno salió el Dante a volver a ver las estrellas" (94-95). It is worth noting that both Unamuno and Buero use stars to represent this light. Ignacio laments that "ahora están brillando las estrellas con todo su esplendor ... al alcance de nuestra vista..., ¡si la tuviéramos!" (113). Pajón Mecloy notes that typically, the sun is used as symbolic of light as knowledge or faith. He concludes that the use of stars has particular significance in Buero's play: "[S]on tan fuentes de luz como el sol, pero no logran jamás disipar la noche; brillan y, a la vez, tiemblan; están al alcance de la vista, pero no hacen visible el mundo" (587). His description is equally applicable to Unamuno's symbolic use of stars in his description of Dante's exit from Hell. Finally, revealing the versatility of light and darkness as symbols, just as Ignacio's desire for "la luz" can be interpreted as a desire for immortality or to understand the meaning of his existence, given that this play, as we will see shortly, can also be interpreted on a social level, his desire for "la luz" could also be understood as a desire for a just, equal society.

Ignacio explains in his own words the power he imagines "la luz" possessing. "Pienso que es como si por los ojos entrase continuamente un cosquillo que fuese removiendo nuestros nervios y nuestras vísceras ... y haciéndonos sentir más tranquilos y mejores" (96). In his moving description of the stars to Carlos in the final act, he says

that their light slowly reaches all the Earth's objects: "¡Se saturan de la alegría de la luz, que es para ellos como un verdadero don de Dios!" (114). By this second description, light is a gift from God that defines objects and—we must assume—people, giving their existence meaning. Just as Unamuno claims that the conflict between rational doubt and irrational desire can produce hope, Ignacio's desire to see, accompanied by his honesty about his personal limitations, also produces hope. Indeed, his unwillingness to abandon his desire to see, in spite of the doubt that he ever could, represents the rebellious hope that we considered in Unamuno and Buero in the previous chapters. In the first act, Ignacio tells Juana: "Aunque sé que es imposible, ¡ver! Aunque en este deseo se consuma estérilmente mi vida entera, ¡quiero ver! ... marcharé solo, negándome a vivir resignado, ¡porque quiero ver!" (90). As we saw in the previous chapter, Buero claims that only with awareness of our limitations can we hope to surpass them, and only then can true advances be made. Buero represents this claim through Ignacio, whose awareness of his blindness allows him to hope for something greater than relative comfort and happiness supported only by self-deceit. In his final confrontation with Carlos, Ignacio argues:

> IGNACIO. Y ésa es tu desgracia: no sentir la esperanza que yo os he traído.
>
> CARLOS. ¿Qué esperanza?
>
> IGNACIO. La esperanza de la luz.
>
> CARLOS. ¿De la luz?

IGNACIO. ¡De la luz, sí! Porque nos dicen incurables; pero, ¿qué sabemos nosotros de eso? Nadie sabe lo que el mundo puede reservarnos, desde el descubrimiento científico..., hasta... el milagro.

CARLOS. (*Despectivo*) ¡Ah, bah! (114).

Just as significant as Ignacio's hope in scientific or even miraculous possibilities is Carlos' disdainful, "¡Ah, bah!" The fear that is implied as the explanation for Carlos' unwillingness to confront the limitations of his blindness also prevents him from hoping for the seemingly impossible. At the play's end, Carlos dismisses doña Pepita in a similar way: "¿Qué es la vista? ¡No existe aquí la vista! ¿Cómo se atreve a invocar el testimonio de sus ojos? ¡Sus ojos! ¡Bah!" (125). We must remember now Buero's opinion of the absurd view, of absolute doubt, mentioned in "La tragedia." "No hay pesimismo más radical que el de dar por segura la falta de sentido del mundo" (75). Carlos' claim that sight does not exist represents the absurd view that Buero clearly, in his theory of tragedy as well as in this play, does not advocate. Buero portrays the shortcomings of the side of extreme doubt most clearly through Miguel's flippant argument: "[N]osotros no vemos. Bien. ¿Concebimos la vista? No. Luego, la vista es inconcebible. Luego los videntes no ven tampoco" (96). Ignacio, however, refuses to succumb to such a view. Doménech tells us that, "tampoco se hunde en una mera aceptación resignada, de tipo fatalista, de su ceguera, de las tinieblas" (59). Doménech also recognizes that his refusal to do so affords Ignacio his hope: "Esta conciencia de la propia limitación no niega, sino que supone, un íntimo anhelo, muy poderoso, de superarla" (59). Ignacio's hope reminds Doménech of Fray Luis, Don Quijote and Unamuno. For this reason, he argues that Ignacio represents a uniquely Spanish hope.

"Ignacio es un personaje empapado de desesperación española. De desesperación... y de esperanza: la esperanza de lo imposible" (59-60). Pajón Mecloy, while maintaining a greater "pessimism," also compares Ignacio to Don Quijote: "No existen gigantes ni Dulcineas, pero el hombre tiene la necesidad de soñarlos; no existen estos mundos del más allá que Buero simboliza en las estrellas tras los cristales, pero el hombre arde en deseos de llegar hasta ellos, de romper los hierros de la cárcel que nos limita" (581).

Reed Anderson argues that "[t]he passion to understand the world of sight transforms itself for Ignacio into a faith that he himself might someday see" (6-7). It would be more accurate, however, to say that Ignacio's passion transforms itself into a *hope* that he may someday see. If Ignacio had faith, he would not doubt; he would not be, "ardiendo por dentro; ardiendo con un fuego terrible, que no me deja vivir" (90). The type of hope based on authenticity described in *Del sentimiento* and represented by Ignacio is always accompanied by doubt and anguish. Pajón Mecloy quite astutely notices the symbolic importance of two seemingly trivial characters: Esperanza and Lolita. "Se llaman Lolita (Dolores) y Esperanza. El dolor y la esperanza lo persiguen" (589). These two girls not only pursue Ignacio relentlessly, they are also inseparable. Buero has Esperanza, the symbol of hope, prophetically announce Ignacio's role before he has hardly been introduced. When he refers to himself as a "pobre ciego", the students assume he is joking and tell Miguel, the class clown, that he now has a competitor. Esperanza claims, "¿Un competidor? ¡Un maestro!" (76). Esperanza also shows, after Ignacio's death, a terrible loneliness, as if to say that hope has died with him. She clings even more desperately to her counterpart Lolita, pain. "¡No me dejes, Lolita! Estoy llena de pena ... Es terrible esta soledad" (120).

Because hope based on authenticity is always aware of the improbability of attaining the desired object, this hope does not, in the short run at least, lead to a happier existence. This is apparent from the play's beginning when we contrast Ignacio, dressed in black and disheveled, with the other students, particularly Carlos, who is sharply dressed in light clothing. By the second act, Ignacio has acquired several followers and their newfound authenticity is reflected in their more somber behavior and disregard for their personal appearance. We learn from doña Pepita that several of them have stopped wearing ties (117). In addition, Buero tells us that "*el enlace parece haberse roto entre los ciegos*" (93). They no longer seem able to sense when another has entered the room as they did in the first act and they participate more clumsily in their sports. Ignacio shows that hope will always be accompanied by doubt when he explains, regarding the stars, that "[b]ien sé que si gozara de la vista moriría de pesar por no poder alcanzarlas" (113). Once one object of hope is fulfilled, if personal limitations still remain, one will encounter new hope to surpass those limitations followed by the doubt of its possibility. Ignacio's confession brings to mind Unamuno's even more doubtful consideration of the stars: "Aquella lejana estrella que brilla allí arriba durante la noche se apagará algún día y se hará polvo, y dejará de brillar y de existir. Y como ella, el cielo todo estrellado. ¡Pobre cielo!" (185). As we have already seen, Ignacio is well aware of the dark side of this type of hope. For this reason, in the first act, he warns Juana that his hope, "puede haceros arder a todos" (90). He recognizes this fact again in his final confrontation with Carlos:

> CARLOS. Tienes el instinto de la muerte. Dices que quieres ver... ¡Lo que quieres es morir!

IGNACIO. Quizá... Quizá. Puede que la muerte sea la única forma de conseguir la definitiva visión...

CARLOS. O la oscuridad definitiva. Pero es igual... (115)

Feijoo draws our attention to the similarity of this conversation with a passage from Byron's *Cain* that Unamuno translates in *Del sentimiento* (65). "Puede ser que la muerte conduzca al más alto conocimiento. Es decir, a la nada" (153). For the tremendous doubt that burdens Ignacio, Pajón Mecloy labels him an anti-hero: "Ignacio no es un héroe que atraiga por sus cualidades positivas proyectadas a lo infinito, sino un antihéroe que nos subyuga a través de su dolor más profundo" (581). Pajón Mecloy also finds this overwhelming doubt in the "ardiente oscuridad" of the title itself. "Nos encontramos ante una especie nueva de fuego que, en vez de expandir luz, expande tinieblas" (586).[43]

The similarities between Buero's concept of faith, doubt and hope in *En la ardiente oscuridad* and Unamuno's tragic sense of life are abundant. It must be noted now that Buero's perception of the role of other people in an individual's existence seems equally influenced by Unamuno's thinking. However, as we will see, Buero is far more successful than Unamuno at representing the complexities of individuals and their interactions with one another in drama. Doménech, as we recall, claims the primary preoccupation of Buerian drama is "the tragedy of the individual" (64). One defining feature of the individual is his or her loneliness, according to Doménech and, in Buero's

[43] Pajón Mecloy also notes that the terms "ardiente" and "oscuridad," "recuerdan, en la interpretación simbólico-sexual del psicoanálisis, atrbutos vaginales" (588). Pajón Mecloy does not, however, explain how this interpretation might fit with the more obvious symbolism of light and darkness in this play. My analysis dismisses such a possible interpretation as, if not entirely incorrect, at the very least misleading and distracting from the larger themes at hand.

drama, "[e]l tema de la soledad se amplifica, de este modo, al tema de la personalidad" (66). Through consideration of the individual's personality, Buero also explores the great influence that other people have on the individual. In *En la ardiente oscuridad*, we see at least two types of influence that people may have on one another: the positive influences of love and compassion, and the less pleasant—although in many cases still positive—definition and reinforcement of one's limitations. We will begin with an analysis of the importance of love and compassion in this play. Doménech argues that all of Buero's dramas offer examples of characters redeemed through meaningful relationships with others and that, in these relationships, the hope that Buero describes tragedy producing can most easily be found. He claims that contemplative characters like Ignacio almost always lose in Buero's dramas but that "todos estos personajes 'se salvan' porque han verificado una relación humana con *el otro* ... Es en este punto donde el teatro de Buero Vallejo ... sin duda, mejor puede corroborarse su idea de *esperanza trágica*" (69).

As we recall, in *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno claims that love is the only thing, "que rellena y eterniza la vida" (92). Buero portrays this concept through Ignacio's relationship with Juana. Feijoo tells us that "el descubrimiento del amor produce en el joven una evolución no siempre debidamente resaltada por la crítica" (58). Reflecting Unamuno's claim that love is inherently selfish because, "cada uno de los amantes busca poseer al otro" (181), Ignacio argues that love between two blind people is inferior: "¡[P]ero esa maravilla [del amor entre los ciegos] no pasa de ser una triste parodia del amor entre los videntes! Porque ellos poseen al ser amado por entero. Son capaces de englobarle en una mirada. ... No nos amamos. Nos compadecemos" (100). However, Unamuno argues that love based on compassion, feeling one another's pain, is in fact a

superior and less selfish form of love: "[L]os hombres sólo se aman con amor espiritual cuando han sufrido juntos un mismo dolor" (182). In spite of Ignacio's previous claim, it is clear that he shares Unamuno's view. He makes this argument when Juana suggests that he needs a girlfriend. "No necesito una novia. ¡Necesito un 'te quiero' dicho con todo el alma! 'Te quiero con tu tristeza y tu angustia; para sufrir contigo, y no para llevarte a ningún falso reino de la alegría'" (89).

Ignacio believes he has found love in Juana because she has compassion for him; in contrast with Lolita and Esperanza, Juana suffers with him. We first see Juana's compassion towards Ignacio in her conversation with Carlos at the beginning of the second act: "Está intranquilo; carece de paz interior..." (93). Ignacio witnesses Juana's sympathy for him when he listens to her conversation with Elisa unbeknownst to them. Elisa insults Ignacio and claims she hates him. Juana, on the other hand, argues that "[n]o se propone nada. Sufre... y nosotros no sabemos curar su sufrimiento. En el fondo es digno de compasión" (105). Juana's words initiate a dramatic change in Ignacio. He tells her: "Me has dado mi primer momento de felicidad. ¡Gracias! ¡Si supieras qué hermoso es sentirse comprendido! ¡Qué bien has adivinado en mí! Tienes razón. Sufro mucho" (107). This moment of happiness fills Ignacio with new confidence. He expresses faith—not hope—that Juana loves him too. "Tú quieres aliviar mi pena con tu dulzura... ¡Y vas a dármela! ¡Tú me la darás! Tú, que me has comprendido y defendido. ¡Te quiero Juana!" (107). Ignacio's words also show that he believes he has found in Juana a love based on authenticity: "¡Me quieres con mi angustia y mi tristeza, para sufrir conmigo de cara a la verdad y de espaldas a todas las mentiras que pretenden enmascar nuestra desgracia! ¡Porque eres fuerte para eso y porque eres buena!" (107-8).

We find physical proof of the validation and meaning that Ignacio finds in Juana's compassion at the closing of the second act. Ignacio concludes his profession of love by grabbing her and giving her a passionate kiss. Just as he does this, Carlos and don Pablo enter the room and hear them. To escape, "*Ignacio, con el bastón levantado del suelo, conduce rápidamente a Juana hacia la portalada. Sus pasos no titubean; todo él parece estar poseído de una nueva y triunfante seguridad*" (108). Feijoo recognizes that Ignacio displays the most hope—for example, in the possibility of scientific discovery—in the final act. Feijoo explains this hope in the following manner: "Sin duda es esa 'triunfante seguridad' ya citada, nacida del amor de Juana, la que le ha hecho evolucionar" (64). It is also in the third act that Ignacio reveals the dramatic extent to which Juana's love has changed him when he tells Carlos that "aunque algunas veces pensé en el suicidio, ahora ya no pienso hacerlo" (116).

As we recall, in *Del sentimiento,* Unamuno describes maternal love as "compasión al débil," and he claims that "en la mujer todo amor es maternal" (183). Feijoo argues that in *En la ardiente oscuridad*, Juana's love follows Unamuno's description: "[S]u amor es compasivo, lo cual es para Unamuno lo característico del amor femenino y desde esta perspectiva hay que entenderlo en Buero" (67). Iniesta Galván appears to agree: "Su actitud en toda la obra ... está más cerca de la comprensión maternal que del interés erótico" (135). However, Iniesta Galvañ's analysis of Juana, with surprisingly misogynist overtones for a study published in 2002, contradicts his own characterization. Iniesta Galvañ analyzes Igancio's profession of love for Juana, in which he declares his love, his need for her compassion and he praises her for being strong and good. Noting that Juana says nothing in response, Iniesta Galvañ argues that "[n]o es

posible atacar, de un solo golpe, tantos puntos débiles en la fortaleza de cualquier mujer. Aun así, Juana calla; olvida el pobre Ignacio un detalle: las mujeres se enamoran de los poetas pero se casan con los reyes" (135). In his analysis, Iniesta Galvañ refers to Juana's "complejidad y *malicia*" (129). The maliciousness he finds in Juana—so strong that he feels he must highlight it in italics—does not prevent him from concluding that she is, "en efecto, una mujer 'normal'" (136). Iniesta Galvañ finds maliciousness in Juana's immediate return to Carlos after Ignacio's death. He believes Buero purposefully keeps Juana, "en una prudente pasividad, sin renunciar a Carlos pero sin dejar del todo a Ignacio, hasta saber quién quedaba vencedor," which, according to him, "recuerda demasiado la clásica escena del mundo animal, con los machos peleando a muerte y las hembras esperando en paz a ser fecundados por quien sobreviva de los dos" (136). It is certainly true that Juana never declares her love for Ignacio. Instead of kissing Ignacio back, she simply allows him to kiss her. And it does feel something like a betrayal that, the very moment she learns of Ignacio's death, she runs to Carlos' arms and apologizes for having distanced herself from him. Still, her behavior is perfectly in keeping with someone who feels split loyalties between a declared boyfriend and someone for whom she feels great compassion.

While Unamuno's assertion that all female love is maternal, as we saw previously, is overly simplistic in its own right, Iniesta Galvañ attributes this type of love to Juana. His description of Juana's behavior, however, is in direct disagreement with Unamuno, who tells us that "quien más compadece más ama" (183), and therefore concludes the following about female love: "[E]s su amor más amoroso y más puro que el del hombre y más valiente y más largo" (184). Iniesta Galvañ's comparison of Juana

with the typical female of the animal world robs her of the complexity that Buero has given her. For this reason, I much prefer Feijoo's interpretation of Juana's seemingly rushed return to Carlos at the end of the play: "tras [la] muerte [de Ignacio], es Carlos el que ha quedado extrañamente solo y desvalido, como un nuevo Ignacio, y por eso vuelve prontamente junto a él. Juana es la encarnación de la frase de Unamuno: 'Quién más compadece más ama'" (67). Feijoo does recognize, however, that "siendo vida y arte dos territorios diferentes, desde el punto de vista teatral [la reacción de Juana] puede ser algo apresurada" (67). It might finally be suggested that her return to Carlos simply represents human weakness: in the face of death, she did not want to be alone.

Buero does not limit his portrayal of the beneficial effects of compassion on Ignacio to his romantic relationship with Juana. Buero shows that Ignacio is also influenced by the understanding of his peers. As we saw, Ignacio is disillusioned when he arrives at the school because, "[c]reí que encontraría... a mis verdaderos compañeros; no a unos ilusos" (88). However, by the second act, "comprobamos con qué facilidad Ignacio gana adhesiones entusiastas entre sus compañeros, y cómo estos prefieren su *verdad trágica* a la *ilusión de normalidad*" (Doménech 60). As we recall, Unamuno tells us that "[e]l hombre ansía ser amado, o lo que es igual, ansía ser compadecido" (183-84). Compassion and understanding from his peers, while perhaps not as fulfilling as the romantic love he feels for Juana, leads Ignacio to new security. In the second act, Ignacio's awkwardness is replaced by an easy demeanor among his peers. He continues to argue with Carlos that the school's "moral de acero" is founded in a lie, but when he appears to have proven Carlos wrong, instead of showing egotistical triumph, his attitude towards Carlos is "[*b*]*enévolo*" (100), confirming what he would later argue: "¡Los

compañeros, y tú con ellos, me interesáis más de lo que crees!" (113). It is also easy to imagine that the assurance Ignacio finds in the support of his peers contributes to his confident boldness with Juana at the end of the second act. Buero shows repeatedly in this drama that our need for understanding is part of our human condition. Ignacio recognizes that his conflict with Carlos is made worse by lack of understanding: "El mayor obstáculo entre tú y yo está en que no me comprendes" (113). Buero also reveals the need for understanding through Elisa and Carlos. At the beginning of the third act, Elisa compares Carlos' loss of Juana with her own loss of Miguel. "Comprendo muy bien tu pena, porque es como la mía" (110). However, again, Carlos refuses to confront reality and recognize that Juana has developed feelings for his enemy, which leads Elisa to exclaim: "¡Qué dolor el tuyo..., y sin lágrimas! ¡Llora, llora como yo! ¡Desahógate!" (110). In this case it is clear that, had Carlos been willing to abandon his comfortable lie, he might have found more comfort in the compassion that Elisa offered him.

In this play, Buero also represents the role of other people, when we confront them *cara a cara*, as being a constant reminder of our own limitations. Buero's views on this point echo those expressed in *Del sentimiento*: "[T]ener conciencia de sí mismos, tener personalidad, es saberse y sentirse distinto de los demás seres, y a sentir esta distinción sólo se llega por el choque, ... por la sensación del propio límite. La conciencia de sí mismo no es sino la conciencia de la propia limitación" (187). Given the fundamental importance of recognizing our limitations in Buero's concept of tragedy, regarding this claim by Unamuno, Feijoo concludes that "incluso podría pensarse que Buero concibió esta obra a partir de tales ideas" (59). We see several examples of "the other" leading the characters to recognize their own limitations in this play. At the end of

the first act, when Ignacio explains the anguish of his desire to see, Juana responds: "Tú aciertas a darme la sensación de mi impotencia" (89-90). In the second act, Ignacio describes how "the other" first led him to confront the limitations of his blindness:

> Fue al bajar los escalones. Seguramente a vosotros os ha ocurrido alguna vez. Uno cuenta y cree que han terminado. Entonces se adelanta confiadamente el pie y se pega un gran pisotón en el suelo. Yo lo pegué y el corazón me dio un vuelco. Apenas podía tenerme en pie; las piernas se habían convertido en algodón, y las muchachas se estaban riendo a carcajadas. Era una risa limpia y sin malicia; pero a mí me traspasó. Y sentí que me ardía el rostro. ... Yo estaba a punto de llorar. ... Entonces me senté en un escalón y me puse a pensar. Intenté comprender por primera vez por qué estaba ciego y por qué tenía que haber ciegos. (95)

Ignacio's tale confronts Juana again with her own blindness: "*Juana ha reflejado en su rostro una extraña identificación con las incidencias del relato*" (96). Carlos recognizes the power of other people in the formation of our views about ourselves as well. For this, he argues that, to get rid of Ignacio, "[s]ólo nos queda un camino: desautorizarle ante los demás por la fuerza del razonamiento; hacerle indeseable a los compañeros" (94).

While Carlos is, in the beginning, the most resistant to Ignacio's arguments, by the play's end, it is clear that his encounters with other people have forced him to recognize the limitations of his blindness as well. Carlos argues in the second act that he does not understand Ignacio's obsession with "la luz" and "la vista", "[s]obre todo cuando no encuentro en ellas otra cosa que inquietud y tristeza" (97). His attempt to take away Ignacio's authority in front of the others through reason, however, fails. Ignacio

argues that "confías demasiado. Tu seguridad es ilusoria... No resistiría el tropiezo más pequeño" (99). He then challenges Carlos to walk rapidly to him in order to prove his faith in the claim that blindness imposes no restrictions. However, while talking, Ignacio quietly places a fan in Carlos' path. Carlos accepts the challenge but, sensing the fan, vacillates for a moment before walking around it. Ignacio points this out to Carlos, who characteristically denies it. But then Miguel forces Carlos to admit his failure: "Hay que reconocerlo, Carlos. Todos lo advertimos. ... ¡Un tanto para Ignacio!" (100). In the third act, we see the effects these confrontations with other people have already had on Carlos' own transformation in the following argument to Ignacio: "¡Yo defiendo la vida! ... Porque quiero vivirla a fondo, cumplirla; aunque no sea pacífica ni feliz. Aunque sea dura y amarga" (115). His acceptation of a possibly bitter, unhappy and hard life stands in contrast to his previous arguments. For this reason, Feijoo claims that here is where we first see Ignacio's influence on Carlos (83). Shortly after this argument, Carlos abstractedly fiddles with the pieces on the chessboard. The use of chess as symbolic of the futility of life in Unamuno's *La Esfinge*, we recall, is an appropriate interpretation of its significance in this scene as well. If we view Carlos in this scene as pondering the purpose of his existence and beginning to face the limitations of his being, his response to don Pablo and doña Pepita in the next makes even more sense. These two wonder why the students are so concerned with "la luz." Carlos reveals again an understanding for Ignacio's position when he suggests: "Acaso porque la ignoran les preocupe" (117). Carlos' transformation appears to reach its completion at the end of the play when he symbolically takes off his tie: "*se despechuga, despojándose con un gesto que es mitad de ahogo y mitad de indiferencia, de la corbata*" (125). Buero's stage directions, using a

Kierkegaardian language that evokes an image of "fear and trembling," then describes, "[*u*]*na voz grave, que pronto se encandece y vibra de pasión infinita*" (126). It is this voice that repeats Ignacio's anguished longing to see the stars, "al alcance de nuestra vista... ¡si la tuviéramos!" (126).

We must now consider doña Pepita's critical role in this play as the "seeing other." Her physical ability to see, in the beginning of the play, does not appear to save her from the blindness to reality suffered in common at the school. She is an ardent supporter of her husband and of the school's "moral de acero." By the play's end, however, doña Pepita's ability to see is critical to this drama on both a literal and a symbolic level. It is only through her account that the reader learns for certain that Carlos is Ignacio's murderer. In addition, when she accuses Carlos of his crime and warns him that he has not won, he is confronted with the reality he has been trying so hard to escape and, immediately after, reveals that he has adopted Ignacio's anguished perspective. In this sense, she serves as the final and possibly definitive influence in Carlos' conversion to a greater level of authenticity. Feijoo argues that "doña Pepita debe ser eliminada en el nivel simbólico, y su presencia se justifica tan sólo por necesidades de la acción" (82). However, her ability to see could be considered symbolic of having access to a higher truth or reality, which, when confronted with it, Carlos can no longer deny. For this reason, I consider Reed Anderson's summary of doña Pepita's role in this play the most accurate:

> Her sight has given her possession of a devastating secret, and regardless of how viciously Carlos attempts to negate the fact, the truth that her sight has afforded her ultimate power over him remains irrefutable, thereby

> confirming in fact Ignacio's abstract assertion that the sighted hold an arbitrarily vested power over the blind. (9)

Iniesta Galvañ also considers doña Pepita's ability to see crucial in this play. He describes her as "uno de los personajes más llenos de vida, y de luz, en ese mundo de ciegos" (148). Again, however, Iniesta Galvañ supports himself with questionable reasoning: "[U]na mujer de cuarenta años está considerada, en la actualidad, el animal más perfecto de la creación. Ni hormonas necesita para su plena e intensa capacidad sexual" (148). For this, he concludes: "Pobre Ignacio: no es Juana ni Miguelín ni Andrés quienes lo comprenden. Nunca sabrá que sólo doña Pepita lo ha querido con su tristeza y su angustia" (153). I will once more disagree with Iniesta Galvañ. Buero tells us that doña Pepita feels motherly love and compassion for Carlos, not Ignacio (102). While doña Pepita does acknowledge Ignacio's greater authenticity at the play's end, she has been complicit in his murder: first, by agreeing with don Pablo that Carlos must find a way to get rid of him and finally, by choosing to cover up the murder she has witnessed. Finally, we must remember that doña Pepita's confrontation with Carlos in the penultimate scene becomes most aggressive after Carlos cruelly rejects her, insinuating—as does Buero himself in his stage directions (102)—that she might have romantic feelings for him (125). It is far more plausible, therefore, to conclude that hurt feelings, in addition to the horror of witnessing a murder, cause her to become so aggressive with Carlos as opposed to genuine, spiritual love for Ignacio.

As we have seen, Buero's portrayal of the various impulses in the inner workings of each individual in addition to the influences shared when two individuals interact with one another paints an appropriately complex picture of human existence. Buero's insight

into all the possible motives for human actions and reactions allows for the creation of far more believable characters than those developed by Unamuno. In order to fully understand the complexity of Buero's characters and their interactions with one another, we must now give some final consideration to the rivalry between Ignacio and Carlos and Buero's view that tragedy allows for the confrontation of two partial truths. First, while the struggle between Ignacio and Carlos is clearly ideological, it is important to remember that they are also fighting for the same girl. Ignacio, always more honest, argues that Juana is the true cause of their rivalry. "[Q]uieres que me vaya por una razón bien vital: ¡Juana! ... Juana es la razón de tu furia, amigo mío" (115). Buero explains why he felt it necessary to include this "razón vital" in this play:

> Es constante humana mezclar de forma inseparable la lucha por los ideales con la lucha por nuestros egoísmos; a veces sólo luchamos por éstos cuando decimos o creemos combatir por aquellos. Tan intricada es esta mezcla entre nuestro espíritu, que la costumbre de separarlos en el teatro sólo conduce, por lo común, a la creación de comedias convencionales. Yo no quise en la mía desintrincar la mezcla. En mi propósito, Ignacio y Carlos pelean tanto por una mujer como por una idea. (qtd. in Doménech, *El teatro* 61)[44]

As we recall from *La Esfinge* and *La venda*, characters that only represent an idea often lack the humanity that would facilitate the arousal of fear and pity in the spectator. For this reason, Buero's inclusion of the "razón vital," as he suggests, directly benefits the success of this play as a tragedy.

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[44] Cited from "Comentario." *En la ardiente oscuridad* . Madrid: Escelcier, 1951. 9.

Doménech tells us that "[l]a antinomia Ignacio-Carlos volveremos a encontrarla, con cualesquiera variantes, en no pocas obras posteriores. ... A un lado están los hombres *contemplativos*; al otro, los *activos*" (66-67). In "La tragedia," Buero claims that "[c]ada personaje posee su razón, y por ella lucha ... La limitación del hombre posibilita que dos verdades parciales puedan oponerse y luchar entre sí, pues en su misma parcialidad reside su fallo" (70). Buero recognizes that while Ignacio is more authentic, Carlos also has persuasive explanations for his position. The night that *En la ardiente oscuridad* made its debut, Buero admitted that "[y]o me reconozco tanto en el Carlos como en el Ignacio de mi obra. Ellos luchan en mi corazón desde siempre" (qtd. in Feijoo 83).[45] For this reason, Feijoo concludes that "[la] postura [de Carlos] y la de Ignacio no se excluyen, sino que se complementan" (84). We must now consider, therefore, the extent to which Carlos' position can be considered representative of a partial truth. Feijoo argues the following:

> La verdad está más repartida entre ambos que a primera vista pudiera parecer. Ignacio aporta a sus compañeros la verdad, pero los hace desgraciados, inseguros, vulnerables al desaliento. Carlos, por su lado, defiende la filosofía del Centro, ... [la] cual proporcionaba a los ciegos limitados, pero evidentes progresos. (83)

Buero's claim that both Ignacio and Carlos fight within himself is easy to understand. It is true that Ignacio's hope based on authenticity is accompanied by terrible doubt, which leads to anguish. It is for this reason tempting to follow the same rationalizations that Carlos uses. For example, Carlos recognizes the universality of human suffering, which

[45] Cited from, Ángel Laborda. "Antonio Buero Vallejo estrena esta noche en el María

implies that the blind suffer no more nor less than anyone else: "La desgracia está muy repartida entre los hombres" (98). It is also compelling, given the evidence at hand, when he tells Ignacio that "[m]is palabras pueden servir para que nuestros compañeros consigan una vida relativamente feliz. Las tuyas no lograrán más que destruir; llevarlos a la desesperación" (103). Perhaps his most compelling argument is his previously cited defense of life: "Porque quiero vivirla a fondo, cumplirla; aunque no sea pacífica ni feliz. Aunque sea dura y amarga. ¡Pero la vida sabe a algo, nos pide algo, nos reclama!" (115). Yet, as we saw, this argument is already influenced by Ignacio's more authentic approach to life and therefore sounds much less willing to deny the *negruras de la vida* than his previous arguments.

Feijoo claims that Carlos is the "personificación de la razón," while, "Ignacio, en cambio, rechaza, o mejor, intenta superar la razón" (73). Feijoo is correct to assert this if we consider Carlos' "¡Ah, bah!," which indicates that reason has led Carlos to conclude that such things as scientific progress or even miracles are impossible. This is the same reasoning that Feijoo describes Ignacio rebelliously hoping to overcome. However, we must not forget that Carlos, far more than a position of absolute doubt arrived at by pure reasoning, advocates self-deceit. It is hard to consider him the embodiment of reason when he encourages the perpetuation of a lie. It is therefore more accurate to describe Carlos as representing a *practical* position, which is, by its very nature, reasonable. Carlos describes himself in the following manner: "Sabéis que soy un hombre práctico. ¿A qué fin razonable os llevaban vuestras palabras? Eso es lo que no comprendo. Sobre todo cuando no encuentro en ellas otra cosa que inquietud y tristeza" (97). His position is

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Guerrero." *Informaciones* (December 1, 1950).

indeed very pragmatic and, I suspect, the one more commonly held by the spectator. In *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno describes the very position represented by Carlos as sensible: "Los sensatos dicen que esta obsesión sólo entristece la vida" (102). We recall, however, Unamuno's scorn for "los sensatos." Unamuno recognizes that "[e]l mundo quiere ser engañado" (354). Carlos' stubborn refusal to confront reality embodies Unamuno's observation. Buero makes this point even more clear through the far less abstract question of whether or not Juana has developed sympathies for Ignacio. Carlos reveals the faulty reasoning required to maintain his self-deceit on this question to Elisa when he claims, "[t]iene que ser así y es así" (110). This statement, which exposes little more than Carlos' will, leads Elisa to conclude: "No sé si estás desesperado o loco" (111). As we saw in "La tragedia," Buero clearly prefers the authentic existence that confronts its limitations. Therefore, we must consider Buero's granting Carlos his partial truth no more than an expression of sympathy for the desire to live a happy life. As we saw in the previous chapter, Buero's opinion of basing such a life on lies is in perfect harmony with Unamuno's expressed in *Del sentimiento*: "Y a todos nos falta algo; sólo que unos lo sienten y otros no. O hacen que no lo sienten, y entonces son unos hipócritas" (72).

Evidently, *En la ardiente oscuridad* deals far more extensively with metaphysical or ontological questions than it does with socio-political issues. As was indicated in the previous chapter, however, there is commonly a fusion of both topics in Buero's plays. It will therefore be useful to consider briefly the possible social interpretations of this play. Doménech reminds us that Ignacio's struggle for the light occurs within an organized, social institution: "[E]l drama sitúa esta aspiración en una realidad concreta, en un microcosmos social" (63). This social microcosm has its dictatorial leader, don Pablo,

and his loyal supporters, Carlos and doña Pepita. Ignacio announces his role within this system to Juana in the first act: "vosotros sois demasiado pacíficos, demasiado insinceros ... Yo os voy a traer guerra y no paz" (90). Ignacio's arrival has disrupted the social order. His desire for "la luz," on a social level, symbolizes the desire for social justice, equality, and freedom. In this sense, blindness represents arbitrary social inequality and lack of freedom. Ignacio alludes to this interpretation when he argues that "[e]s abominable que la mayoría de las personas, sin valer más que nosotros, gocen, sin mérito alguno, de un poder misterioso que emana de sus ojos" (95). Barry Jordan argues that "blindness can be related to the wider context of the institution or social system, to the established norms and conventions which regulate the system and ensure the acceptance and preservation of the *status quo*" (185). Ignacio's provocation of deeper thought and authenticity about the reality within which the students live represents the greatest possible threat to the institution. Juan Cruz Mendizábal describes this threat: "Pensar, hacer reflexionar, abrir los ojos a nuevos horizontes, ha sido siempre causa de desconcierto, de destrucción de las 'grandes' obras cimentadas en la mentira. El pensar ha sido el enemigo número uno del sistema impositivo" (424). Ignacio tells Juana, and therefore the spectator as well, "[n]o debemos conformarnos" (90). Doménech considers this claim central to the social message of this play, which he summarizes in the following manner:

> La conclusión podría enunciarse así: no somos libres y no podemos conocer el misterio que nos rodea porque *además*, vivimos en una sociedad organizada desde y para la mentira ... que se empeña en

> convencernos de que no somos ciegos, es decir, de que somos libres y felices, cuando en realidad no somos libres y somos desgraciados. (63)

The social message in this play is hidden in the symbolism of blindness, light, and the social order of the school. For this reason, the message is not explicit. Still, Anderson reminds us that "[t]he spiritually crippling effects of an imposed political and moral order with absolute claims to universal authority must have been immediately apparent to any sensitive intellectual in such times" (11).

With a better understanding of the implications of this play on a social level, it is now appropriate to consider whether or not this play does indeed offer the hope that Buero attributes to all tragedy. On a social level, a hopeful message is certainly imaginable. Ignacio, the revolutionary leader, is dead and the center appears to return to its "moral de acero." But Carlos' conversion to the philosophy of Ignacio suggests that, with his death, another dissenter is born. With the perspective of sixty years since this play was first written, we have seen, in one concrete example, Ignacio's hope realized: the dictatorial regime of Franco symbolized by the school did indeed crumble and Spain now enjoys, albeit far from perfect, a much freer society. On a metaphysical level, however, the hopeful message is less clear. Iniesta Galvañ, as we know, argues that this play does not offer hope. He claims that "[e]l 'ritornello' de la última escena ... proporciona a la tragedia su carácter de abierta esperanza. Es una necesidad del autor y, como intención, está bien. ... Sólo que no es probable, ni siquiera tomado en su aspecto simbólico" (133). If we consider "la luz" representative of the existence of a just God or of the immortality of the soul, Unamuno showed in *Del sentimiento* that acquiring this "luz" is indeed rationally improbable. Pajón Mecloy also sees hopelessness in the desire

to see "la luz." "Desde el punto de vista de la realidad que representa, lo que Carlos dice es cierto: la luz que Ignacio quiere ver no existe" (579). In life, these issues are certainly debatable. However, within the context of Buero's play, Iniesta Galvañ and Pajón Mecloy are simply wrong. On the literal level, light does exist, and Buero leaves no room for doubt on this issue. When Miguel argues that sight is, to the blind, inconceivable and therefore does not exist, Ignacio reminds us that Miguel's argument, "nos permitiría vivir tranquilos si no supiéramos demasiado bien que la vista existe" (96). We saw in the previous chapter that Buero does not personally believe in God, but we also saw that he argues in "La tragedia" that there is no greater pessimism than to consider the meaninglessness of the universe certain (75). It is therefore hard to imagine that Buero, who claims that tragedy is optimistic, would choose to represent this "falta de sentido del mundo" as assured. In fact, as we recall, Buero tells us that such an example of absolute doubt, while interesting to consider, is never the final message of tragedy: "El absurdo del mundo tiene muy poco que ver con la tragedia como último contenido a deducir, aunque tenga mucho que ver con ella como apariencia a investigar" (71).

Iniesta Galvañ also claims that "*En la ardiente oscuridad* es una tragedia, con su anhelo abrasador y la evidencia de su imposible satisfacción" (154). His exhaustive study, however, never once mentions Ignacio's argument that "nos dicen incurables; pero, ¿qué sabemos nosotros de eso? Nadie sabe lo que el mundo puede reservarnos, desde el descubrimiento científico..., hasta... el milagro" (114). Just as Buero argues that there is no positive evidence of the meaninglessness of human existence, he has Ignacio argue that there is no positive evidence that the blind are incurable. It is hard to imagine that such a careful dramatist would gratuitously include an argument that is, when

interpreted symbolically, so similar to his own. We must therefore conclude that Buero has Ignacio suggest these possibilities in order to keep these questions unanswered and thereby make room for the hope that, if the answers are found, they will be positive. That said, curing the blind seems possible, but a challenging task to say the least. Far more so, knowing for certain the meaning of our existence is, while perhaps not conclusively impossible, highly improbable. Still, as we recall, the hope that Buero describes is an absurd, rebellious hope; it is hope for the impossible. Therefore, Iniesta Galvañ may be describing the nature of his own hope when he claims that "[e]s cierto que esperanza no significa certeza, pero sí una razonable expectativa en la posibilidad de llegar a conseguir determinado objeto o situación: ver como posible lo deseado" (156), but the hope that Buero describes does not require such a reasonable expectation of being realized.

Now that Buero's concept of tragic hope in *En la ardiente oscuridad* has been analyzed, it will be useful to consider how it is expressed in an Aristotelian manner. Feijoo correctly observes that "la construcción de la obra es clara y lineal; exposición, nudo y desenlace se suceden ordenadamente" (68). *En la ardiente oscuridad* follows Aristotle's description of the most desirable tragic plot. The hero, Ignacio, moves from a state of fortune, acceptance among his peers and self-validation found in love, to misfortune, his death, through some fault or error. Most simply, as was often the case with Unamuno's tragic heroes, Ignacio's error can be attributed to his "egoísmo." It must be noted immediately, however, that Ignacio, unlike, for example, Ángel of *La Esfinge*, has many redeeming qualities that tend to make his faults more easily forgiven. Feijoo identifies Ignacio's error in that he, "lucha por [Juana] ... a la vez que se muestra vanidosamente confiado" (83). While it is certainly understandable that Ignacio pursues

the meaning and happiness that he finds in his love for Juana, he is attempting to steal Carlos' girlfriend. Furthermore, he foolishly provokes Carlos on this very sensitive subject. In the second act he tells Carlos, "[h]ablaré lo que quiera y no renunciaré a ninguna conquista que se me ponga en el camino. ¡A ninguna!" (104). In their final confrontation, as we saw, it is Ignacio who insists that they discuss "la razón vital" of Juana. After Ignacio admits he is in love with her, he taunts Carlos by telling him that "[t]e daré una alegría momentánea: Juana no es aún totalmente mía" (116). In this display of vanity and egoism, Ignacio is prompting his own murder. Carlos responds by warning him that "[t]e marcharás de aquí sea como sea" (116). Elisa, who Iniesta Galvañ considers "una especia de narrador de la obra," since "Buero la sitúa al inicio de los tres actos" (127), refers openly to Ignacio's egoism. She argues to Juana that "[l]e compadeces demasiado. Es un egoísta. ¡Que sufra solo y no haga sufrir a los demás" (106). Finally, as we saw, Ignacio argues to Carlos that "[e]l mayor obstáculo entre tú y yo está en que no me comprendes" (113). Yet it could be argued that Ignacio, due to his self-centeredness, fails to understand Carlos just as much as Carlos fails to understand him. Indeed, it is Ignacio's fatal misunderstanding and underestimation of Carlos that leads to his death: "(*Riendo*.) Carlitos, no podrás hacer nada contra mí" (116).

In addition to following an Aristotelian tragic plot, Buero includes several classic elements of tragedy, including a modern-day chorus and music. As we recall, Buero developed the choral function of the students during the four years he spent revising this play. Iniesta Galvañ describes the purpose of these students: "Tienen significación coral y son interlocutores necesarios para constatar el potencial contagioso de *la verdad* del recién llegado" (128). Music appears at two critical moments of the play. In the first act,

Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* begins to play just before Ignacio explains to Juana his desire to see. Juana immediately draws the reader's attention to it: "Escucha. ¡Qué hermoso!" (86). The selection of *Moonlight Sonata*, with its slow rhythm and gloomy notes that gradually rise in volume, in addition to its very title, nicely complements the revelation of Ignacio's passion to see. Ignacio, always pondering the stars, carries this melody into the second act when he, "*silba melancólicamente unas notas del adagio 'Claro de luna"*" (104). In the final act, as Carlos murders Ignacio outside, we hear music again. Pajón Mecloy describes its relevance in this scene:

> Cuando Ignacio va a morir algo extraño se advierte en el espacio escénico. Al modo de un personaje más se presenta la música. ... El fragmento que, a través de la radio, empieza a oírse pertenece a 'La muerte de Aase' del Peer Gynt de Grieg. Un momento, ciertamente no por azar, la melodía se queda sola en la escena. El arte mismo, en un monólogo, se expresa en términos de evocaciones y reminiscencias. (592)

The selection of "Aase's Death" is directly correlated to Ignacio's death. Pajón Mecloy reminds us that Aase, in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, asks on his death bed: "Algo brilla y centellea allí a lo lejos. ¿De dónde viene esa luz?" (592). For the reader aware of both the music and Ibsen's play, the music would clearly suggest Ignacio's death and the possibility, which Ignacio himself suggests, that death may be the only definitive means of attaining "the light." It is evident, then, that Buero uses a chorus and music for the same purpose as in classic tragedy: to enhance the meaning as well as the beauty of the tragedy.

The technical merits of Buero's drama explain the greater success he experienced in the theater compared with Unamuno. As we saw in the complexity of his characters and their interactions, including the confrontation of two partial truths, Buero is far more capable at creating an "hombre de carne y hueso" on the stage than Unamuno. Due to this complexity, his characters are far more believable. While Ignacio stands for a particular philosophy, Feijoo reminds us that "Ignacio no es una mera abstracción portadora de un mensaje filosófico más o menos interesante; Buero no escribe un teatro alegórico" (60). For this reason, it is much more likely that the reader will feel fear and pity for Ignacio. In addition, while this play clearly represents the concepts of *Del sentimiento* through symbolism, there are so many possible interpretations of this symbolism that the drama could grip even those spectators that care little for Unamuno's philosophy. Unlike Ángel of *La Esfinge* who anguishes explicitly over what will happen to him after he dies—a concern that will not plague every spectator in the same manner—Ignacio merely desires to see, which can be interpreted by each spectator as representative of their own personal seemingly unattainable desires. Finally, the likelihood of the spectator feeling fear or pity for Ignacio is enhanced by Buero's brilliant and moving use of "immersion effects" in this play, when all the lights of the theater are slowly turned off as Ignacio describes the "burning darkness:"

> Yo sé que los videntes tratan a veces de imaginarse nuestra desgracia, y para ello cierran los ojos. (*La luz del escenario empieza a bajar*.) Entonces se estremecen de horror. Alguno de ellos enloqueció, creyéndose ciego..., porque no abrieron a tiempo la ventana de su cuarto. (*El escenario está oscuro. Sólo las estrellas brillan en la ventana*.) ¡Pues,

> en ese horror y en esa locura estamos sumergidos nosotros!... ¡Sin saber lo que es! (*Las estrellas empiezan a apagarse*.) Y por eso es para mí doblemente espantoso. (*Oscuridad absoluta en el escenario y en el teatro*.) Nuestras voces se cruzan... en la tiniebla. (114)

If the spectator has not yet felt sympathy for Ignacio's desire to see, it is hard to imagine that this scene would not prompt him or her to develop the emotions of fear and pity for his condition. As we saw, these immersion effects force the spectator to experience subjectively the tragic hero's personal conflict and therefore share his or her emotions. For this reason, in addition to an already masterfully developed play, rich with complex characters and layers of meaning, Buero's first use of the immersion effects enhances the effectiveness and therein the quality of this tragedy.

***La tejedora de sueños: Drama en tres actos* (1951)**

This drama, which retells Odysseus' return to Ithaca in the *Odyssey*, is one of Buero's earlier plays. It was written in 1950 and made its debut in January of 1952 (*O.C. II* LVII). This drama focuses on the figure of the faithful Penélope who waited twenty years for her husband to return. Martha Halsey tells us that this drama "is described by its author as the 'interior tragedy' of a Greek myth" (*Antonio Buero Vallejo* 46). The play opens with Penélope seated at her loom, weaving a shroud for her father-in-law, Laertes. Her slaves sing a rhapsody praising Penélope's beauty, riches and happiness, which is quickly proven false as we learn of Penélope's financial ruin and tormented spirit, represented in her laughter followed by weeping. In the first act we are introduced to Penélope's faithful, blind *nodriza*, Euriclea, who at a critical moment senses the Furies

and Vengeance approaching. Immediately after, Penélope's son, Telémaco, enters with an unknown beggar. Feijoo rightly asserts that "cualquier espectador culto sabe que el mendigo extranjero es el rey" (98). We are also introduced to Penélope's suitors, all of which are drunk and rude as in the Greek myth, except for one, Anfino. These suitors have been in Penélope's house for four years, awaiting her completion of Laertes' shroud, at which point she has promised to choose one of the suitors. We learn that, as in the myth, Penélope spends her days weaving and her nights unraveling the shroud in order to prolong having to make a choice. In the second act, the suitors, informed by the devious slave Dione, design and execute a plan to catch Penélope unraveling the shroud. In this act Penélope also confesses to Anfino that she loves him while Ulises hides behind a curtain.[46] After the suitors discover her secret, she agrees to hold a test in which the first suitor to string Ulises' bow and shoot an arrow straight through twelve rings will become her husband and king of Ithaca. In the final act, the test takes place and, as in the myth, all suitors fail. Then, having locked the suitors in, Ulises reveals his true identity and kills every one of them, including Anfino before Penélope's eyes. The play ends with a confrontation between husband and wife, however, unlike the myth, the two detest one another. Penélope blames Ulises for not trusting her and returning disguised out of fear that he may no longer be pleasing to her and to test her fidelity. She swears her eternal love for Anfino, and Ulises, seeing he has lost everything, decides to find a pretext to leave, but not before maintaining appearances. He has composed a new

[46] I will refer to the character in Buero's play as Ulises, following Buero's choice of the Roman name and the spelling in Spanish. When referring to the Greek myth, I will call him Odysseus. I will similarly refer to all characters in Buero's play with the name and spelling that Buero uses and, when in reference to these charcters in Homer, will use the most common English spelling.

rhapsody for Penélope's slaves to sing that tells the Homeric version of the myth, claiming she only loved her husband and faithfully awaited his return for twenty years. As the chorus sings, in sharp contrast, Penélope speaks words of hatred towards her husband and hopes for the day when men, "tengan corazón para nosotras y bondad para todos; que no guerreen ni nos abandonen... ¡Cuando no haya más Helenas... ni Ulises en el mundo!" (183).

Feijoo claims that, with this drama, "Buero convirtió una historia de espera ejemplar en un mito que habla de amor y de guerra, de sueños y de cobardía" (111). The following analysis of this drama will consider first the originality of Buero's version of the classic myth and the significance of the changes he made to the original story. Then, this section will consider two Unamunian themes that were also present in *En la ardiente oscuridad*: the struggle of hope and doubt as it is represented in the figure of Penélope, and the importance of the truth, or authenticity, in contrast with lies and false appearances. The social message in *La tejedora de sueños* is not secondary to the themes already mentioned, however. For this reason, this section will also consider the commentary on war as caused by a lack of mutual love and understanding. The hope for the possibility of a human community free from war is represented in Anfino. This section will therefore consider the contrast between Ulises and Anfino, taking into consideration the similarities between their conflict and Carlos and Ignacio's. Finally, as in the previous analysis of *En la ardiente oscuridad*, this analysis will close with a consideration of the extent to which we can consider this play hopeful, followed by an analysis of its technical merits and the extent to which it follows the Aristotelian requirements for tragedy.

Feijoo tells us that in Buero's version, "el mito no es destruido, sino transformado. ... Su intención es, pues, presentar otras facetas, ignoradas por la versión más divulgada del mito" (97). Nevertheless, Feijoo assures us that "Buero procede con una actitud fundamentalmente respetuosa, tratando de ahondar en sus temas" (98). Buero explains the intrigue he found in the figure of Penelope: "El problema de Penélope no podía ser distinto de las demás mujeres cuyos esposos fueron a guerrear a Troya," nor, "de cualquier mujer de nuestros días que tenga marido en un frente de lucha" (*O.C. II* qtd. in Iniesta Galvañ 263). Halsey explains Buero's interest in this character as well: "[S]ince Penelope was the purest and most prudent of these women deserted by their husbands, she was therefore, perhaps the most tortured" (46).

As we have seen, Buero did not radically change the fundamental plot of the myth. Doménech tells us that "[d]e la *Odisea* toma el autor las líneas temáticas generales ... Varía considerablemente, en cambio, el valor que el dramaturgo ajudica a estos hechos" (247). A detailed study of the differences between Homer's *Odyssey* and Buero's play would be both interesting and useful. My analysis, however, will mention only the most significant variations. The greatest difference, obviously, is that in Buero's tale, Penélope, instead of the paradigm of faith, embodies an Unamunian conflict between hope and doubt and falls in love with one of her suitors. By the play's beginning, twenty years have passed since Ulises left and she, understandably, no longer believes he will return. For this reason, instead of unraveling the shroud at night to give Ulises more time, she does it hoping that eventually her kingdom will become so poor that all suitors except Anfino will change their minds and leave. She is afraid that if she openly chooses Anfino the other suitors will kill him. We learn that she did initially

begin her weaving and unraveling in order to gain more time for Ulises' return, but also to prolong her own "pequeña guerra de Troya," in which a group of men fight over her just as they did for Helena (156). In addition, as we will see, Ulises is not the paradigm of bravery but is instead deceitful and cowardly. Other changes to the original myth include Euriclea, who in Buero's version is blind, and the slave Dione, who does not appear in the *Odyssey*. However, Manuel Alvar, who spends some time comparing Buero's play to the Homeric myth, tells us that Dione is most likely based on Melanto, the servant who betrayed Penelope (300). Alvar also shows that Buero's suitors, by and large, correspond in personality to those of the Greek myth, arguing that Buero chose Anfino as the one to win Penélope's love because in the myth, as in the play, he is the gentlest, he defends her son Telémaco against the others, and he is the son of Ulises' former best friend (303).

Pajón Mecloy, in his interesting analysis of this play as an example of demythification of the values of a patriarchal society in Ancient Greece as much as in Spain of the 1950's, claims that "*La tejedora de sueños* supone una violenta sacudida a esta forma de mentalidad nuestra" (224). He tells us that when this play first appeared on the Spanish stage, many considered it an illicit destruction of a myth that supported worthy values. He explains this reaction in the following manner: "[E]l drama inquietaba, nos pedía el esfuerzo de replantarnos un problema que creíamos resuelto definitivamente" (224). Buero argued that his rendering of this tale did not destroy the original myth because "la destrucción del mito sólo es posible por la indiferencia. Cuando un autor de nuestro tiempo da su versión de un mito..., lo sirve en realidad, por

muy personal que la versión sea" (qtd. in Feijoo 97).[47] Pajón Mecloy argues that Buero's originality lies in his treatment of Penelope's story as a tragedy, noting that ancient tragedians instead preferred to take from Homer the story of Agamemnon and Clitemnestra (223). He claims that "un mito se enriquece cuando se le enfoca desde nuevos ángulos. Y este es el caso de su Penélope, observada como una Clitemnestra en potencia" (240). In this play, Penélope is conscious of her historic role as the symbol of faith, in contrast with that of Clytemnestra, who took a lover while her husband was gone and arranged for his murder when he returned:

> PENÉLOPE. ¡Ella nos vengó a todas!
>
> EURICLEA. ¡Pero tú no harías eso!
>
> PENÉLOPE. No. (*Con triste ironía*.) Yo soy la fiel Penélope. (147)

Pajón Mecloy notes the inherent unfairness of expecting a woman to wait for a husband who may be dead or who may have made a new life elsewhere for twenty years: "No es difícil hacerse cargo de lo cómodo que resulta para el ... hombre conquistar primero a una mujer, irse después a conquistar tierras, y, a la vuelta a casa, encontrar disponible, fiel, la conquista primera" (222). The audience should remember that, in the Greek myth, Odysseus did sleep with the goddesses Circe and Calypso, albeit "against his will." In fairness to the original story, however, it is important to recognize that fidelity like Penelope's was not *expected* of all wives. Her fidelity was unusual. This explains why it was socially acceptable that the suitors would try to marry her and it is also what made her tale *extraordinary*. Pajón Mecloy is correct, however, to note that the idealization of her faithfulness perpetuates its association with the image of the ideal

[47] Cited in "Comentario." *La tejedora de sueños*. Madrid: Alfil, 1952. 78.

wife. Buero's work is important for drawing attention to the inequality inherent in the image of the faithful wife because, according to Pajón Mecloy, "[n]i el arte ni la filosofía han sabido desmitificar la valentía masculina y la fidelidad femenina y darles el justo valor dentro de un equilibrio de valores verdaderamente humanos" (223). With Penélope stripped of her faithfulness and Ulises divested of his bravery, Pajón Mecloy recognizes that these characters are no longer extraordinary. He claims that Buero presents us with, "dos culpables, dos antihéroes. ... De los mitos griegos conformadores de la cultura griega pasamos, de un salto, a las figuras meramente humanas de la etapa de la tragedia de la cultura española" (224).

Buero's Penélope is indeed "meramente humana." Her long wait for Ulises' return without any definitive news of what has happened to him provides Buero with an ideal opportunity to explore the struggle between faith and doubt that we saw in *En la ardiente oscuridad*. As we recall, Buero claims that tragedy always lies somewhere between the two extreme poles of absolute faith and absolute doubt ("La tragedia" 76). For this reason, Penélope is the model tragic figure for Buero. Alvar tells us that Penélope, "[h]a vivido en fidelidades, pero la esperanza ha desaparecido; sin esperanza no hay fe" (292). Alluding to the complexity of this character, Feijoo tells us that "su larga espera desesperada está llena de incertidumbre y contradicciones" (100-01). When Penélope is first introduced, Buero alludes to these contradictions in his stage directions: "*La reina ya no es joven, pero aún es bella ... en la contradictoria expresión de su rostro riñen permanente batalla y la tímida ansiedad*" (132). The first act of this play is primarily taken up with the presentation of these battles and anxieties and, as a result, has

relatively little action: "Todo el primer acto de Buero Vallejo no es sino el desnudo espiritual de esta mujer" (Alvar 292).

Penélope reveals to Euriclea that her doubt is based on reason: "Ulises sabría, cuando quisiera, encontrar solo el camino de esta casa" (133). We learn in this act that Penélope's relations with Telémaco are strained, in large part because he has a greater faith than she that his father will return. He brings a stranger—Ulises disguised—to her with news of her husband. When Penélope doubts the stranger, Telémaco complains, "[t]ú nunca quieres creer" (135). Again, however, Penélope has good reasons for her doubt: "No sé si creerte. Eres el tercero que me afirma haberlo visto, pero él no vuelve" (137). Feijoo tells us that, in the first act, Penélope's, "espíritu, vacilante entre el creciente interés por Anfino y el cada vez más vago recuerdo de su esposo, titubea indeciso" (101). This indecision comes from the conflict between the last remnants of her hope that Ulises will return and the—very reasonable—doubt that he ever will. By the end of the first act, we see that her doubt is far stronger than her hope. She first laments to Euriclea that "Ulises tarda. ... ¡Tarda, tarda mucho, tardará ya siempre!" (146). Shortly after, she shows vague hope in asking, "¿Volverá, nodriza?." However, Buero tells us that "[*e*]*lla misma hace melancólicos gestos negativos, mientras espera la respuesta*" (147). As we know, her hope for Ulises' return is replaced by the hope that she may one day marry Anfino. These hopes too, however, are filled with doubt. When Anfino's turn at Ulises' bow arrives, in spite of the sacrifices she made to the gods of love and war the evening before, she has little faith that Anfino will succeed: "¡No podrá, no podrá, no podrá!" (173).

Like *En la ardiente oscuridad*, this play is rich in symbolism. The title itself, *La tejedora de sueños*, alludes to this symbolism. Penélope keeps the door to her loom closed so that no one may see the figures she is weaving because these figures represent her dreams. The act of weaving, therefore, symbolizes Penélope's hope, while the unraveling of the shroud symbolizes the destructive effects of doubt on her hope. The opening lines of the play, following the rhapsody of the chorus of slaves, let us know that Penélope has a conflicted spirit. We cannot see Penélope behind the loom, but we hear her laughter. Dione comments, "¡Ya está riendo la viuda!," to which the first slave responds, "No tardará en gemir..." (130). The laughter occurs when Penélope is weaving her dreams into the shroud, while the crying, when she confronts the reality of the impossibility of her dreams as she unravels them. Feijoo's study summarizes very nicely the symbolism of weaving then unraveling and of laughing then weeping in this play:

> [C]omienza a dibujar sobre la tela sus sueños de un mañana mejor, y de ahí surge el dolor ... el mundo no permite—aún—que los sueños se hagan realidad y, por ello, a los momentos de risa alegre, producidos por la esperanza de que un día sean verdad cuando teje, los lamentos y gemidos que produce la constatación de su imposibilidad actual. (104-05)

Penélope explains the symbolic importance of her weaving at the end of the first act. She claims that she cries for, "[l]a vida que no he vivido. ... Porque toda mi vida ha sido destejer... Bordar, soñar... y despertar por las noches, despertar de los bordados y de los sueños... ¡destejiendo!" (148). Dione, who tells us in the first act, "[y]o sé bien por qué ríe la viuda. Y por qué gime. Y lo que borda en el sudario" (131), tells Anfino in the second: "Piensa en ti durante el día, cuando teje... Y luego desteje por las noches" (153).

Dione is also in love with Anfino and she hopes Penélope will choose him so that she, aware that she could never marry him herself, may be his permanent lover. She tells him that Penélope has not openly chosen him yet because, "[d]uda todavía, no se atreve. Es cobarde" (153). Penélope confirms what Dione has told him when she confesses her love, telling him that her weavings, "son... ¡mis sueños! Mis sueños, que luego debo deshacer, todas las noches, por conseguirlos definitivamente algún día" (158), thus implying that hope born from the struggle between reason and faith is a nobler, more worthy hope. After Anfino's death, Ulises shows that he too understands the meaning of Penélope's weavings and that, by killing Anfino, he has killed her dreams as well: "Nadie los verá ya. No existen. ... Ese sudario será quemado mañana con el cuerpo de Anfino. A no ser que prefieras destejer lentamente..." (183).

Although Penélope embodies an Unamunian struggle between faith and doubt, it is not surprising that Doménech describes her as "una mujer de carne y hueso y, por lo tanto, de espíritu complejo, movida por sentimientos diversos y contradictorios" (247). It is important to recognize the complexity of Buero's main characters in this play and avoid their classification into simple categories. For example, it is tempting to claim, as does Halsey, that Penélope, as a woman, represents the "idealist" or the "dreamer" (46). As we saw in the previous analysis of *En la ardiente oscuridad*, Buero indeed attributes to women a greater capacity to love that is in keeping with Unamunian views on feminine love. Buero is therefore able to claim that "[p]or y para el amor vive la mujer, si es plenamente femenina" (qtd. in Feijoo 103).[48] On the surface, Buero seems to affirm that women are the dreamers and men, the rationalists. Penélope tells Anfino that "[l]as

[48] Cited from "Comentario." *Madrugada*. Madrid: Alfil, 1954. 92.

mujeres no sabemos razonar, pero soñamos" (156), which stands in direct contrast to his previous claim: "Yo soy hombre y sé razonar" (155). However, further analysis makes it clear that we are not supposed to take these characters' descriptions of themselves at face value. First, as we will soon see, Penélope proves Anfino a faithful dreamer immediately following his claim that he, as a man, knows how to use reason. In addition, as we have already seen, Penélope knows how to use reason as well. It is reasoning that leads her to doubt Ulises' return. Alvar claims that, for Penélope, "[t]oda la vida ha sido soñar, y, para siempre, toda la vida será un seguir soñando" (292). However, Alvar supports himself with Penélope's already cited claim that "toda mi vida ha sido destejer... Bordar, soñar... y despertar por las noches, ... de los sueños... ¡destejiendo!" (148). This very example highlights Penélope's disillusionment, which, brought on by reasoning and symbolized in the act of unraveling the shroud, is the opposite of dreaming. Instead of a life of dreaming, Penélope has led a life within the constraints of the tragic cycle between hope and doubt or, following the terminology of this play, between dreams and reason.

Feijoo argues that Buero's views on the psychology of men and women presuppose a greater capacity for dreaming in women, and for reasoning in men. However, Feijoo appropriately recognizes that Buero's own characters show that this will not be true of every man or woman: "Cierto es que hay mujeres que son incapaces de [soñar] ... al igual que hay hombres que no sólo razonan" (104). While much of the criticism of this play tends to create black and white categories—in which Penélope is the dreamer, Anfino is purely good and Ulises is the evil, cold rationalist—Feijoo's study, like Doménech's, appreciates the conflicting forces in Penélope's personality. He tells us that "Pénelope no es inocente, ni un ser de una pieza; también ella posee esa excesiva

'prudencia' que caracteriza a Ulises" (106). Indeed, Buero has Euriclea, considered the voice of truth in this play, remind Penélope of her own astuteness and prudence: "Sé que eres fuerte y astuta, como tu esposo Ulises" (134). Shortly thereafter, Penélope admits the same, albeit with an ironic tone: "La prudente esposa del no menos prudente Ulises. Si él volviera, a todos nos sobraría prudencia" (147). Feijoo is therefore right to conclude that Penélope "[n]o es tan diferente de su marido como ella misma quiere creer, ni tan pura como para no merecer su castigo, aunque la magnitud de éste pudiera parecer excesiva" (107).

Penélope's lack of innocence is most directly attributable to her vanity and envy of Helena. In *Del sentimiento*, Unamuno tells us that "[l]a envidia es mil veces más terrible que el hambre, porque es hambre espiritual" (107). Manifesting this "spiritual hunger," Penélope envies Helena's beauty, which was powerful enough to cause the war that took Ulises away. The ironic song in the opening scene of the play tells us the opposite: "La divina Artemisa tu honestidad bendice y hasta la misma Helena te envidia tu belleza" (132). Knowing this song to be false, the spectator thus begins to gain insight into some of the shortcomings of Penélope's personality in the first few moments of the play. Her vanity is apparent in the last scene of the play as well. When she complains to Ulises, Penélope's love for Anfino seems to have been motivated in large part by his finding her beautiful: "Ese corazón que tú has roto adoraba mi juventud y mi hermosura..." (181). In Ulises' first encounter with his wife in twenty years, he is confronted with her vain envy. As he, disguised as the stranger, tells Penélope what he knows of Ulises, she quickly changes the subject to ask him about Helena. For this reason, Ulises asks: "¿Es de Ulises de quien quieres saber, o de Helena?" (137). Sensing

Penélope's envy, and most likely upset that she did not show more interest for him, Ulises tells her that Helena is more beautiful than ever. In their final confrontation, however, Ulises admits that he lied, and reflecting the exaggerated importance of beauty in determining a woman's value, he declares:

> ULISES. ¡Ya no hay Helena, mujer! ¡Ya no existe!
>
> PENÉLOPE. ¿Murió?
>
> ULISES. No. ... Pero está fea, y vieja. ... Has envidiado inútilmente. (178)

Buero shows the potentially ugly results of excessive vanity in this play. The very Penélope who, as we will see, condemns all war, admits that she enjoyed the rivalry among her suitors and that for this reason she first began unweaving the shroud at night:

> Treinta jóvenes jefes, hoy viejos o muertos, conducían nuestros ejércitos en Troya por causa de Helena. ¡Y treinta jóvenes jefes, hijos de los anteriores muchos de ellos, venían a rivalizar por mí! ¡Por mí, por Penélope! ¡No por Helena, no! Sino por Penélope. (*Pausa*.) Era mi pequeño desquite... Mi pequeña guerra de Troya. Me sentía vivir. (156)

It is important to remember, however, that Penélope is operating within a society where a woman's beauty is valued above almost any other quality. Losing her husband when she was young and beautiful and being forced to wait for him for twenty years, during which time she clearly aged, deprived her of the very best years she had to be appreciated for this superficial, but nevertheless important, quality. In addition, Penélope's admission of this to Anfino reflects her own awareness that her motives were impure. She tells him, "[t]ampoco soy buena. Deberías comprenderlo ahora, después de lo que te he dicho" (157). For these reasons, Doménech's sympathy for her "pequeña guerra de Troya" is

understandable: "No desteje lo que ha tejido para prolongar así la espera de Ulises, sino para prolongar esta situación que le restituye su dignidad de mujer, humillada por la partida del esposo" (247). Further complicating Penélope's personality are her mixed feelings towards Ulises. By the plays end, it is clear that she hates him. However, before she knows he has returned, she still has fond memories of him and she makes it clear that she waited for him in good faith for some time. In addition to her desire to prolong the suitors' rivalry for her, she tells Anfino that she first began the shroud, "porque todavía esperaba a Ulises, sí" (156). At the end of the play, she claims she now hates Ulises because he is no longer, "[e]l Ulises con quien soñé, ahí, los primeros años" (181). Finally, even after she has confessed her love to Anfino, she still considers Ulises superior to the other suitors. During the test with the bow, still unaware that the stranger is Ulises, she taunts the other suitors: "¡Es el arco de un hombre!" (168), and "¡Es fuerte y flexible como Ulises...!" (171), thus eliciting looks of surprise from him. In an even stronger display of her preference for Ulises over the suitors, when the returned king reveals himself and begins killing the suitors, Penélope encourages him: "¡Mátalos!" (176).

It is clear that, for the first few years at least, Penélope did faithfully await Ulises' return. It is her confrontation with "reality" that forces her to accept that Ulises will not return. Unlike Ignacio, she is not willing to hope for the absurd. Like Ignacio, however, who achieves a greater level of honesty about his blindness both through reasoning and confrontations with other people, Penélope also comes to the conclusion that Ulises will never return through reasoning and confrontations with other people. As we have already seen, her slaves refer to her disrespectfully as "la viuda." Dione states in the opening

scene that "sabe ella que es viuda. Y que le llaman 'la viuda' en todo el país" (131). Dione is right. Shortly after, Penélope tells Euriclea to call her "viuda:" "¡Dilo! Sé que todos lo dicen" (134). Later, revealing the inability to confront reality that she believes continuing to hope for Ulises' return entails, Penélope asks her again: "¿Por qué no me llamas viuda? Esa viuda trastornada ... Esa loca, que prefiere sus recuerdos a una elección prudente, ¿no?" (146). An important difference between authenticity or self-honesty in this play and in *En la ardiente oscuridad*, however, is that here the rational position, that Ulises would never return, turns out to be wrong.

As we have seen in the case of Penélope, "the other" has a significant role in confronting the characters with their limitations and forcing them to attain a higher level of honesty about themselves in this play, as in *En la ardiente oscuridad*. We see several examples of these types of confrontations between two people in this play. Penélope tells Ulises that she pardoned Dione's disrespectful behavior because she feared Telémaco, who is in love with Dione, would only feel greater sympathy towards the slave and more hatred towards his mother if she were to punish her. But Ulises tells her, "[t]e engañas. Lo hacías porque era a Anfino a quien no querías ver compadeciendo a Dione" (180). Penélope does not deny his claim, she simply confronts him with his own coldness towards her: "No te recordaba así" (180). Penélope continues to present Ulises with his own faults. When he tells her he is not afraid to know the truth she says, "[p]ero tienes miedo de sentir, y de creer. No te atreviste a creer en mí. Dudaste de mí..." (181). Anfino, however, reveals most explicitly the inherent difficulty in recognizing our own faults and limitations when he tells Dione: "Te engañas a ti misma. No podrías vivir tranquila si te vieses tal como eres realmente" (154).

Besides Euriclea, Anfino is the only character in this play who is not deceitful. His honesty and faithfulness set him apart from Ulises. One clear example of his honesty occurs when, after the suitors agree to the test with Ulises' bow, Telémaco leaves with his disguised father as Anfino stays behind with Penélope. Telémaco, however, worries that Anfino may in secret practice with the bow. Anfino is insulted that Telémaco would distrust his honesty and Telémaco, thinking better of it, says, "[b]ien, bien... Me tranquilizo. Tú siempre serás tonto" (166), revealing that he knows Anfino is too honest to try to gain an unfair advantage, which he, like his father, considers stupid. After they leave, Penélope encourages him to try the bow, and, living up to his word, he refuses. "¿No comprendes que no podría probar aquí, sólo, frente a ti? No me atrevería a mirarte más a la cara" (166). Anfino's refusal differs greatly from Ulises' approach. Once they are gone, Ulises immediately returns with Telémaco to try the bow himself. It is worth mentioning that it is also at this point that Buero first openly refers to him as Ulises, and not the stranger:

> TELÉMACO. ¿Qué pretendes, padre?
>
> EXTRANJERO. Vigila. (Telémaco *va a la izquierda para vigilar mientras el mendigo*—Ulises—*descuelga el arco y va al centro de la escena*.) En empresas como ésta no conviene arriesgarse, hijo mío. (167)

Then Ulises, in center stage, attempts to string the bow twice before he is successful. From this point on, Buero introduces Ulises' lines using his real name. With this introduction to his true identity, Buero clearly wishes to accentuate these two very unattractive qualities of Ulises to the audience and to the reader: his deceitfulness and his

unscrupulous pragmatism. Homer's Odysseus also struggles with honesty. However, the image of this Ulises stumbling to string the bow and failing twice creates a startling contrast with the mythic figure whose strength and agility are never questioned.

Given his dishonesty, it is not surprising that Buero's Ulises is most concerned with appearances. Feijoo notes that when he returns, Ulises, instead of trusting his wife, "prefirió atender a los valores del respeto social, del 'prestigio'" (106). Halsey summarizes Ulises' attitude in the following manner: "Although love may perish, appearances must be maintained" (47). Indeed, when Penélope openly admits that she now loves Anfino, and then offers to show Ulises the dreams she has woven into the shroud, he tells her, "[n]adie los verá ya. No existen. ¡Tú soñaste con Ulises!" (183). Even before he witnesses Penélope's confession of love to Anfino, Ulises sets in motion his plan to perpetuate the appearance of Penélope's undying love and fidelity for him. At the end of the first act, Penélope suggests the suitors compose a new rhapsody for the slaves to sing to her, which will facilitate her weaving. The suitors refuse claiming, "[e]l de poeta es un bajo oficio" (145). Ulises, however, recognizing the power of poetry, offers: "Yo compondré esa rapsodia que deseas, reina. Creo saber lo que necesitas" (145). Given that Buero's chorus tells lies, in contrast with the action, it allows the spectator to discover the truth. The first rhapsody sung at the play's opening, as we saw, sings of falsities like Helena's envy of Penélope's beauty, which Penélope's words and actions make clear are not true. Penélope, however, does not like this "*ruda melopea poética sin melodía*" (130): "La rapsodia ... no es muy bella" (133). The second rhapsody, composed by Ulises himself, is also false. This song tells a story of Penélope as the figure of faith, in keeping with Homer. Doménech rightly notes that "[e]l coro

entona esta rapsodia como contrapunto al diálogo final entre Penélope y Ulises, y este diálogo manifiesta todo lo contrario de lo que el coro dice, de lo que Ulises le hace decir" (248). Let us just briefly consider the following fragments of this scene:

> CORO. El esposo partió, pero la reina
>
> su palacio y su lecho ha defendido,
>
> cual nuevo Ulises, sin olvidar nunca.
>
> PENÉLOPE. ¡Te odio!
>
> ULISES. Ya es igual, mujer... Eso debe quedar. ...
>
> CORO. Ella bordó sus sueños en la tela.
>
> Sus deseos y sueños son: ¡Ulises!
>
> .....
>
> Sonría la gloria a la prudente reina
>
> Que nunca ha amado a otro hombre que su esposo.
>
> PENÉLOPE. ¡Mentira!

Feijoo argues that, in having Ulises compose the version of the myth that we are most familiar with after showing its falsehood, Buero, "quiso revelar la gestación de la mentira oficial" (111). In spite of this effort, however, Feijoo concludes that "[e]l mundo es aún de ellos ... de los que prefieren el triunfo de la apariencia sobre la verdad" (108).

The shortcomings and complexity of Buero's characters make them more accurate portrayals of "hombres de carne y hueso." As we have seen thus far, *La tejedora de sueños* is full of metaphysical themes that are very similar to those in *En la ardiente oscuridad* and that are very Unamunian in nature. This play, like *En la ardiente oscuridad*, also has a social message. However, in this play, the social message is far

more pronounced and can be considered equally important. As we will see, the social message is intimately connected to the metaphysical one. The play closes with Penélope before Anfino's cadaver, hoping for the day that men, "no guerren ni nos abandonen. Sí, un día llegará en que eso sea cierto. ... Pero para eso hace falta una palabra de amor universal que sólo las mujeres soñamos... a veces" (183). She then claims that "[t]ú la poseías. Gracias, Anfino" (184). Penélope's experience of war is very personal. War is what put her in the impossible position of trying to maintain her faith. She therefore questions the purpose of that war, and in doing so, of all wars:

> Helena nos quitó a nuestros esposos. Por esa... puerca, las mujeres honradas hemos quedado viudas, condenadas a helar y tejer en nuestros fríos hogares... A consumirnos de vergüenza y de ira porque los hombres... razonaron que había que verter sangre, en una guerra de diez años, para vengar el honor de un pobre idiota llamado Menelao. (156)

Penélope blames Ulises, as a man, for the position she was left in: "Nosotras queremos paz, esposos, hijos..., y vosotros nos dais guerras, nos dais el peligro de la infidelidad, convertís a nuestros hijos en asesinos" (178). Given the recent past of Spain when this play was written, its condemnation of war and encouragement of forgiveness would have had particular significance for its audience. Feijoo highlights this fact through his description of Ulises: "[P]refiere la venganza al pardón, el aniquilamiento del ya vencido antes que la benevolencia con él" (109). However, recognizing that this play is not simply an allegorical commentary on Spain's civil war, he argues that *La tejedora de sueños* is, "una condena de la guerra en sí, de todas las guerras" (109). Finally, Feijoo recognizes that the hope for a word of love that might prevent wars in the future is a

seemingly impossible hope: "Estas palabras proféticas que el autor hace venir del fondo de los siglos, se cargan de sentido trágico porque, milenios después, el espectador sabe que sigue siendo necesario repetirlas; esa 'palabra universal de amor' aún no ha sido pronunciada" (108).

While this impossible word of love has yet to be spoken, we know that Penélope thought Anfino posessed this word while Ulises clearly did not. In order to better understand Buero's message against war, then, it will be useful now to analyze in greater detail the differences between Ulises and Anfino. Buero himself claims that this play speaks about, "todas las funestas realidades del hombre: crímenes, guerras, infidelidades, odios, despotismos, traiciones, mentiras; de todas esas cosas que poseen a Ulises y que reflejan la ausencia de amor entre los seres humanos" (*O. C. II* 360 qtd. in Iniesta Galvañ 269). Feijoo notes the many contradictory qualities of Homer's Odysseus—for example he is a liar yet at the same time virtuous—and tells us that "Buero prescinde de los rasgos positivos y presenta un personaje sin sombra de gloria" (98). Penélope calls him an "astuto patán, hipócrita y temoroso, que se me presenta como un viejo ruin" (181). However, Ulises, like Penélope, is not so simple. First, as we saw when Ulises first returns, he finds a wife indifferent to the husband she has not seen in twenty years and who shows interest in one of her suitors. While it would have been more noble to understand her behavior, his motives for lying in order to spy on Penélope are at least explicable. An even greater sign of there being some humanity in Ulises is his respect for Anfino. After Ulises has shot the other suitors, Telémaco tells him there is one left, Anfino, who Ulises identifies as, "[u]no que no corre, ni tiembla. El único valeroso" (176). Admittedly, Ulises still kills him. However, Ulises insists that Anfino have an

honorable funeral. Ulises also shows respect for his wife by punishing the slaves that betrayed her (177). And finally, he explains to Penélope: "No he venido a matarte. He vuelto para cuidar de mi país y de mi mujer. He venido a evitar muchas cosas, no a desencadenarlas" (178). There is no doubt that Ulises' negative qualities take the foreground. However, Buero, concerned like Unamuno with presenting "hombres de carne y hueso," did grant him, through the complexities of his character and motivations, some humanity.

We have already seen Ulises' lack of faith when he secretly tried to string his bow. Penélope argues that Ulises' greatest fault is this faithlessness, which she describes as cowardliness. Her own lack of faith regarding Ulises' return weakens her argument only slightly:

> Ahora debo decirte que tu cobardía lo ha perdido todo. Porque nada, ¡entiéndelo bien!, ¡nada!, había ocurrido entre Anfino y yo antes de tu llegada..., salvo mis pobres sueños solitarios. Y si tu me hubieses ofrecido con sencillez y valor tus canas ennoblecidas por la guerra y los azares, ¡tal vez! yo habría reaccionado a tiempo. Hubieras sido, a pesar de todo, el hombre de corazón con quien toda mujer sueña... El Ulises con quien yo soñé, ahí, los primeros años... (181)

Ulises, instead of being moved, responds coldly: "No me disfracé por eso. También a ti temía encontrarte vieja..., como te he encontrado" (181). Penélope continues her explanation: "¡Sólo habrías tenido una manera de ganarle la partida! Tener la valentía de tus sentimientos, como él; venir decidido a encontrar a tu dulce y bella Penélope de siempre. Y yo habría vuelto a encontrar en ti, de golpe, al hombre de mis sueños" (181-

82). Ulises also reveals his faithlessness in a very similar fashion to Carlos' "¡Ah, bah!" in response to Ignacio's suggestion that a scientific discovery may one day cure their blindness; when Penélope speaks of the "palabra de amor" necessary to end all wars, Ulises shows the same unwillingness to hope: "Esa palabra no existe" (183).

Given that Anfino supposedly possessed this word, it is important to consider now, in contrast with Ulises' lack of faith, Anfino's faithfulness. Halsey claims that Ulises represents egotistical love while Anfino represents ideal, spiritual love (48). Anfino shows this when he tells Penélope that "yo querré siempre lo que tú quieras," which she describes as a beautiful phrase, so beautiful, in fact, that it sounds, "casi femenina" (155). The characteristic that most distinguishes Anfino's love from Ulises', however, is his capacity for understanding and forgiveness. After Penélope confesses that she has been unweaving the shroud at night and that she did this in part to maintain the rivalry among her suitors, Anfino claims, "[n]o veo en ello nada censurable," to which Penélope responds: "Tú lo comprendes y lo disculpas... Tú solo..." (157). Anfino's "feminine," spiritual love is based on compassion in keeping with Unamuno's description of maternal love and Buero's depiction of such love in *En la ardiente oscuridad*. In this play, his capacity for spiritual love reveals a willingness to give sentiment precedence over reason or, in Unamunian terms, to let the heart guide the head. As a result, Anfino posesses a faithfulness superior to that of any other character in this play. Anfino is faithful even to Ulises. While the other suitors scorn him, Anfino recognizes that "no somos reyes. Sólo Ulises era nuestro rey" (140). This faithfulness, it appears, runs in his family; we learn that he is the orphaned son of Ulises' loyal best friend (142). Penélope, however, reveals Anfino's faith most clearly. Anfino reasons

that Penélope unweaves the shroud at night in order to gain time for Ulises' return. Then Penélope shows that Anfino's faith is stronger than his reasoning:

> PENÉLOPE. Para seguir tu razonamiento, sabes que destejo para engañaros. Terminaron tus esperanzas. Amo a Ulises y tú eres demasiado bueno para tomarme a la fuerza. Tu razón debe aconsejarte que abandones el campo.
>
> ANFINO. ¡No me iré!
>
> PENÉLOPE. ¿Por qué no?
>
> ANFINO. Porque... Porque... ¡Oh, basta! (155-56)

Anfino is unable to explain why he stays when reason tells him it is impossible to obtain Penélope because faith is defined, as we have seen in Kierkegaard and in Unamuno, by its very inexplicability. Anfino's faith that he will win Penélope explains why he refuses to try to string Ulises' bow. He tells Penélope, "[g]anaré la prueba. El dios de la guerra no negará sus fuerzas para esta causa justa" (167). Buero also shows through Anfino, however, that faith is not knowledge. Anfino fails and proves Penélope's doubt correct: "¡No podrá, no podrá, no podrá!" (173-74).

As we have seen, there are many similarities between the Anfino/Ulises and the Ignacio/Carlos rivalries. These similarites are widely recognized by Buero scholars. As he did Ignacio and Carlos, respectively, Doménech also labels Anfino "contemplativo" and Ulises "activo" (248). Iniesta Galvañ, following his classification of Carlos and Ignacio, considers Ulises, rightly, the king, and Anfino the poet (268). The greatest similarity between Carlos and Ulises is that both are inauthentic and lack hope or faith. As we have seen, Buero implies that both are driven by fear. Feijoo argues that "[s]i

Ulises se asemeja a Carlos, el paralelo de Anfino con Ignacio es también muy claro" (107). Ignacio and Anfino, clearly, are willing to hope in spite of tremendous doubt. The similarities in these two rivalries is perhaps most apparent, however, in the deaths of Ignacio and Anfino. Just before Ulises kills him, Anfino tells Ulises that "[m]e matas porque tú estás muerto ya; acuérdate de lo que te digo" (177), which reminds us of doña Pepita's words to Carlos at the end of *En la ardiente oscuridad*: "Pero usted no ha vencido, Carlos; acuérdese de lo que le digo..." (125). Both Ulises and Carlos could be said to be dead in life: Ulises, because he will only go on to live a false appearance of what his life once was and Carlos, because he has been consumed by Ignacio's philosophy. As Doménech explains, Ulises, "[h]a derrotado a Anfino por la razón de la fuerza, pero Anfino, más allá de la muerte, ha derrotado a Ulises—como Ignacio a Carlos—por la razón del espíritu" (248).

Before dying, Anfino also tells Ulises, "[l]a muerte es nuestro gran sueño ... Gracias por tu flecha, Ulises. La muerte es nuestro gran sueño" (177). Feijoo tells us that, like Ignacio, who claims that death may be the only way of attaining definitive vision, Anfino "se ve conducido a la muerte, lo cual es muestra patente de que el sueño liberador, la definitiva visión *aún* no se pueden conseguir en vida" (108). Ulises' final line of the play reflects Anfino's dying words: "Y ahora, a vivir... muriendo..." (184). Penélope's response and closing lines of the play echo the concept that only death will provide this dream:

> O a soñar que se muere... Porque ya no hay figuras que tejer, y el templete de mi alma quedó vacío. Pero aún tengo algo... Mi Anfino. (*En un sollozo*.) ¡Oh, Anfino! Espérame. Yo iré contigo un día a que me digas

> la rapsodia que no llegaste a componer... Tú eres feliz ahora, mi Anfino, y yo te envidio... ¡Dichosos los muertos! (184)

Feijoo's claim recognizes a sense of hopelessness in this play similar to that in *En la ardiente oscuridad*: only death holds the hope of fulfilling these characters' dreams. Further enhancing this sense of hopelessness in *La tejedora de sueños* is that, unlike Ignacio who knew for certain that light and sight exist, in this play the gods are absent, which implies that death brings nothingness. Penélope draws attention to this absence in the following diologue, which is also very much in keeping with Buero's view that the tragic hero's error, and not the gods, causes the tragic downfall:

> ULISES. Todo está perdido. Así quieren los dioses labrar nuestra desgracia.
>
> PENÉLOPE. No culpes a los dioses. Somos nosotros quienes la labramos. (182)

Buero tells us: "La obra debe terminar en el interior de Penélope con la eterna esperanza—trágica desesperanza en la tierra—proyectada al trasmundo donde el muerto la espera" (*O. C. II* 357 qtd. in Iniesta Galvañ 278). For this reason, Iniesta Galvañ argues that "esta es la esperanza de Buero, la misma de Anfino: esperar sin esperanza" (277). Iniesta Galvañ is referring to Anfino's claim to Penélope, "[y]o esperaré, sin esperanza, cuanto tú quieras" (155), from which he takes the title of his book. Iniesta Galvañ disputes Buero's claim by arguing that "en Buero no hay trasmundos donde los muertos esperan a los vivos," and therefore concludes: "Pensamos que, por lo menos en esta ocasión y sin una realidad trasmundana, es difícil vislumbrar la más mínima esperanza, ni *desesperada* siquiera" (278).

Halsey and Feijoo, however, disagree. Halsey argues that, while hope is not always readily apparent in all of Buero's plays, "here it is explicit" (49). Considering Penélope's closing lines, she claims that "[t]he tragedy thus ends ambivalently, with a question full of hope" (50). Feijoo, recognizing that Buero believes even the most seemingly hopeless tragedies still offer hope, claims that "*La tejedora de sueños* termina así de una forma totalmente cerrada: Anfino, muerto; Penélope, desprovista de toda ilusión de vida; Ulises, fracasado en su intento de recobrar a su esposa. Pero, a pesar de todo, una esperanza queda abierta al final" (102). If we remember that the social hope in this play is founded in a personal hope, that love based on forgiveness and compassion makes us personally better and therefore, as a community, more able to avoid war, then this play is not perhaps as hopeless as it at first appears. Feijoo reminds us that "[l]os sueños de Penélope son—debieran ser—los nuestros. Las violencias de Ulises son también de nuestro tiempo" (111). He also argues that "[e]sa esperanza, que abre a perspectivas lejanas el cerrado y sombrío final de la obra, eleva a Penélope a un plano superior, la transforma en un nuevo 'vidente'" (108). Penélope recognizes that this ideal love has made her a better person when she explains to Ulises that she fell in love with "la bondad de Anfino, que me traspasaba y me envolvía, y me hacía mejor" (181). For this reason, Dómenech concludes that "Penélope va a encontrar en él ... la más alta imagen de sí misma" (248). This type of personal improvement through love may not end all wars, but it does at least offer the hope of, one individual at a time, building a human community based on understanding, forgiveness and compassion as opposed to selfishness and revenge.

Regarding this play's technical merits, Feijoo rightly observes that "[l]a acción es rectilínea y poco complicada" (98). Again, Buero has created a superficially simple and highly accesible play with many layers of meaning underneath. As the title shows, this play centers on the figure of Penélope and her struggle with "el sentimiento trágico de la vida." We must, therefore, consider her the tragic hero. Anfino also suffers a downfall, but as a character he is far less developed and complicated. He seemingly has no faults and is also, for this reason, less believable. For example, his thanking Ulises for the arrows that will kill him is, while symbolically relevant, hard to imagine in real life. Penélope, as we have seen, has many faults, such as her vanity, her envy, and her own astuteness. Nevertheless, Buero presents these faults as comprehensible and they should not, therefore, inhibit the spectator's sympathy for her. To the contrary, these faults are signs of her humanity, which should increase the spectator's sympathy for her. There is, however, one scene in which Penélope's behavior is quite unattractive in a way that impairs her credibility when she dreams of a day when there is no more war. As we saw, when Ulises kills the suitors, Pénelope is "*exaltada*" and encourages her husband: "¡Mata! ¡Mátalos!" (176), showing that she too is susceptible to the desire for revenge. Still, it is not until after Anfino is killed that she seems completely transformed and, following an Aritotelian requirement for tragedy, here she behaves admirably. After killing Anfino, Ulises points his arrow at Penélope and, full of rage, accuses her of betraying him. Penélope, however, remains calm and, "[*m*]*uy erguida*," prompts him in the exact same manner that she did as he was killing the suitors: "¡Mata!" (178). Her serene willingness to accept death suggests that Anfino did indeed improve her spiritually and thus, made her truly as faithful as she appears in her closing lines.

In other respects, this play follows the Aristotelian requirements for tragedy as well. This play follows Penélope's downfall from her dreams to a reality in which her new lover is literally dead and her husband is spiritually dead. In addition, Penélope's faults contribute to her downfall. For example, her display of envy of Helena, which took precedence over her concern for Ulises, clearly affected him. It is possible, although perhaps not likely, that he came to her ready to reveal himself until her indifference led him to doubt and he decided he needed more time to spy on Penélope and learn the true state of her fidelity. As we have seen, this play brilliantly uses a chorus as well. Feijoo explains Buero's intentions in building a chorus of the slaves and thus placing the chorus within the action of the play: "El mismo Buero ha dicho que, mientras en la tragedia griega el coro tiene un papel de comentador imparcial de la acción, su 'coro, por estar dentro y no fuera de la acción, deja esa función al público'" (102).[49] Given Aristotle's claim that the greatest pleasure of poetry is learning, it is quite probable that he would approve of a chorus that, by saying things the action shows to be false, requires the audience to discover the truth on their own, as opposed to simply being told how to interpret the action.

There is also great dramatic tension created from the spectator's prior knowledge about the characters. For example, we know that the beggar is Ulises and Penélope's words in his presence therefore take on new meaning. Doménech argues that Euriclea's pronouncements about the future, such as when she announces the arrival of the Furies and Vengeance, create a dramatic tension similar to those created by the immersion

[49] Feijoo takes this quote from José Antonio Bayona. "La crítica criticada. Buero Vallejo y su Penélope. La tragedia, la mitología, el psicoanálisis y la función del coro." *Pueblo* (January 22, 1952).

effects: "[D]e pronto, el misterio, latente por debajo de las manifestaciones superficiales de la realidad, se presiente, se percibe en escena, merced a la habilidad con que el autor ha creado una atmósfera dramática" (150-51). Unlike Homer's version, this Euriclea is blind. However, in contrast with blindness in *En la ardiente oscuridad* and with physical disabilities as representative of human limitations in Buero's plays in general, Euriclea's blindness allows her to see what others cannot. Doménech tells us that "[d]esde su ceguera, sólo la nodriza percibe el misterio que vibra por debajo de la realidad, y para el cual son ciegos todos los videntes" (249). He also tells us that "el propio Buero ha señalado un paralelismo entre Euriclea y Tiresias" (250).[50] Iniesta Galván argues that Euriclea, "[n]o se trata solamente de seres que, como Tiresias, 'ven más allá.' Ocurre, más exactamente, que en ellos es donde reside la verdad, frente a la hipocresía y la mentira de la sociedad de hombres normales y seguros" (274-75). We are alerted to Euriclea's unusual abilities from the very beginning when one of the slaves claims that "ve y oye con las manos" (131). Euriclea proves this capacity when Dione tries to trick her by handing her a red ball of thread and claiming that it is blue: "este ovillo no es azul... Es rojo" (131). Feijoo describes Euriclea in Buero's play as, "la encarnación del destino" (110). Not only is Euriclea able to perceive a truth that eludes others, she is also is able to perceive the future. This is apparent when she announces the arrival of the Furies and Vengeance just before Telémaco arrives with the stranger (135). The first act closes with Euriclea crying, which she explains as, "el destino, que llora por mis ojos muertos" (148). In the final act, right before Ulises reveals himself, Euriclea, crying again, falls to Penélope's feet and warns her, as well as the spectator, of the tragic end at

[50] Doménech makes this claim based on, "Hablando con Buero Vallejo." *Sirio.* 2 (April

hand: "Las furias nos escuchan, reina... ¡Todo está perdido!" (173). Doménech recognizes that such scenes, due to creating a dramatic tension similar to that created with Buero's immersion effects, involve the spectator in the action more deeply: "los personajes sienten—y nosotros, en tanto espectadores, con ellos—en una situación extraña, incierta" (251).

One weakness of this play is that some characters that are integral to the action, such as Anfino and Dione, are not as fully developed as they might have been. Anfino is, as we saw, almost too good to be true. Dione, on the other hand, is almost too bad. Feijoo agrees that her character, "no está perfilado ni dramáticamente atractivo, pues resulta algo unilateral" (99). Another potential detraction from this play's tragic message stems from an inherent risk when treating well-known characters in a new way. The spectator comes into the play with an idea of what the characters are like and, as we saw in the beginning of this section, some simply rejected Buero's stripping Ulises and Penélope of their paradigmatic virtues. However, even the spectator who is open to considering this myth from a new angle might be overly influenced by his or her previous knowledge, particularly in areas where the differences between Buero's version and the myth are unclear. For example, in the myth, Odysseus did not want to go to war. In fact, he tried to pretend that he was crazy in order to avoid it. This question in Buero's play, however, is left unanswered. At one point Penélope asks him, "¿Por qué te fuiste?," to which Ulises simply responds with another question: "¿Por qué has desconfiado de mi vuelta?" (178). If the spectator assumes that Ulises was taken to war and prevented from returning by forces beyond his control as he was in the myth, the spectator may feel

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1962): 4.

greater sympathy for him and therefore, less sympathy for Penélope's infidelity of the heart. On the other hand, the spectator's previous knowledge of these characters is also one of the play's many strengths. Already familiar with Penélope's suffering while she waited for Ulises, we come into the play with sympathy for her, which should therefore contribute to the amount of fear and pity we feel for her downfall and increase this play's effectiveness as a tragedy. In addition, Buero, in taking her from the realm of the extraordinary, creates a human character we can relate to, which, as we recall from the importance of the tragic hero's error, is essential for a successful tragedy.

As Ignacio does in *En la ardiente oscuridad*, Buero's Penélope, now merely human, faces a very human obstacle: doubt. *La tejedora de sueños* is, in this sense, the manifestation of the struggle between hope and doubt in Unamuno's tragic sense of life. Buero, in addition to integrating this tragic sense into his theory of tragedy, successfully portrays it through his characters' struggles. However, Buero does not limit the struggle between hope and doubt to the question of immortality. He shows that this struggle for faith is applicable to anything rationally improbable that we may want to believe: that a world without war is possible, that honesty, trust, generosity and love may triumph, that the blind may be cured, that justice will prevail in the end, that our existence may have absolute meaning, or that there may be life after death. In broadening the reach of Unamuno's philosophy, we see with this play as well as with *En la ardiente oscuridad*, that Buero makes this philosophy far more accessible and successfully transforms this tragic sense of life into two of the finest examples of modern Spanish tragedy.

Conclusion

Debate has always surrounded the genre of tragedy. Plato argued that viewing tragedy harms us, while Aristotle argued that tragic catharsis has a beneficial effect on the spectator. Setting aside the issue of whether or not viewing tragedy is good for us, today the debate addresses whether or not a modern writer can even produce a drama comparable to what the ancient Greeks called "tragedy." Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the first modern figures to argue that the creation of "true" tragedy is impossible in the modern world. As we saw in the first chapter of this study, there are many who agree with Nietzsche. Some, like George Steiner, claim that our modern world is far too optimistic to produce tragedy, while others, like Ramón J. Sender, argue that the modern age is far too pessimistic. Through an analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics* in comparison with the theories and dramas of Miguel de Unamuno and Antonio Buero Vallejo, however, I must agree with Ricardo Doménech's claim about the state of modern tragedy:

> Hoy, con mayor razón, cuando tantos castillos en el aire se han venido abajo, advertimos con mayor claridad que la visión trágica—a menudo ligada al simbolismo y al existencialismo—es la forma de arte y de pensamiento que se mantiene en pie, con toda su vigencia, en este atardecer del siglo. ("Buero Vallejo" 112)

As we saw, Unamuno's *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* describes a human conflict that is both modern and tragic, which he portrayed in the genre of tragic drama with limited success. Buero Vallejo incorporated this Unamunian tragic sense of life into his

theory of tragic drama as well as into the themes of his tragedies, which, in contrast with Unamuno's drama, enjoyed great success.

As we recall, Steiner claims that the modern age, beginning with the Enlightenment, has been governed by two exceedingly optimistic views of the world: faith in progress through reason and scientific discovery and faith in the Judeo-Christian God, who promises immortality of the soul and final justice. Steiner considers both of these views anti-tragic because:

> Tragic drama tells us that the spheres of reason, order, and justice are terribly limited and that no progress in our science or technical resources will enlarge their relevance. Outside and within man is *l'autre*, the "otherness" of the world. Call it what you will: a hidden or malevolent god, blind fate, the solicitations of hell, or the brute fury of our animal blood. It waits for us in ambush at the crossroads. It mocks us and destroys us. (8-9)

In contrast with Steiner's description of tragedy, Sender's argument for the impossibility of modern tragedy is prompted by his analysis of the *esperpento*, which he connects to the satyr Silenus' claim that the best thing for man is never to have been born and, once born, the next best thing is to die quickly (40, 130). Instead of extreme optimism making the creation of modern tragedy impossible, Sender blames extreme pessimism, which, in Existentialism takes form in the absurd view of the world. Due to this extreme pessimism, which he equates with a loss of innocence, Sender argues that the Spanish are incapable of producing tragedies: "[N]unca tragedias con su inocencia lírica y su candor, ese candor e inocencia con que los griegos preguntaban a Dios las mismas cosas

turbadoras que los niños preguntan a veces a sus padres" (138). However, analysis of Aristotle's requirements for tragedy as well as the modern tragedies of Buero and Unamuno lead me to disagree with Steiner and Sender's claims and instead agree with Luis González del Valle: "Los críticos que afirman que la tragedia ha muerto en nuestros días lo hacen, no nos cabe duda, siguiendo ideas preconcebidas. Una visión filosófica de lo que la tragedia debe ser y no la realidad de existentes obras determina su negación de lo trágico en la actualidad" (16-17).

As we recall, Steiner's description of tragedy is not in agreement with Aristotle's description, nor with many examples of classic tragedy. One discrepancy between Steiner's view and classic tragedy is his argument that "tragedies end badly" (8). Stephen White's study, however, reminds us of several examples of ancient tragedies with happy endings, most often the final tragedy of a classic trilogy, such as Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*, which closes the *Oresteia*. Moreover, White convincingly argues that Aristotle *preferred* tragedies with conciliatory endings, reminding us that by Aristotle's own definition of tragedy, "[p]rovided a story involves some serious misfortune, whether actual and ultimate or only prospective, it can end either happily or sadly" (231). Another example of discord between Steiner and classic tragedy is his claim that the misfortunate event in tragedy is inevitable and, therefore, tragedy teaches us that "necessity is blind and man's encounter with it shall rob him of his eyes, whether it be in Thebes or Gaza" (5). Kaufmann's study, however, attributes such a claim to the modern tendency to equate all classic tragedy with the paradigm tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*. Kaufmann tells us that "it is exceedingly unreasonable to suggest that only dramas and events that closely resemble *this* tragedy are truly tragic" (366). As proof, Kaufmann

offers many examples of classic tragedies where the disaster is quite avoidable (365). In addition, Aristotle's insistence upon the existence of an error committed by the tragic hero almost *requires* that the tragic downfall be avoidable. Finally, as we recall, Aristotle's definition of tragedy hinges on this description of its purpose: "accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions" (VI, 1449b28). Jonathan Lear's study of tragic catharsis clarifies what Aristotle had in mind when he used this term and reveals the importance of learning from both the tragic hero's error as well as his or her admirable response to misfortune in the cathartic process. Keeping in mind the centrality of producing fear and pity in the spectator in Aristotle's account of tragedy, as well as the greater flexibility regarding the types of disasters and endings that tragedy may have than is often permitted by many critics' more narrow definition of this genre, this study concludes that modern tragedy, in keeping with the most fundamental Aristotelian requirements, is indeed possible.

Buero Vallejo's theory of tragedy is remarkably in keeping with Aristotle's view of this genre as described by leading Classics scholars such as White, Lear and Kaufmann. First, Buero correctly recognizes that many classic tragedies have happy or conciliatory endings: "[E]n algunas de las tragedias helénicas más importantes, se resuelve [el conflicto entre necesidad y libertad] en la victoria sobre el hado funesto que gravita sobre los héroes" ("El sentido" 8). In addition, in keeping with Lear's description of tragic catharsis as being part of the process of learning about the chain of events set off by the laws of cause and effect that leads to the tragic downfall, Buero, too, believes that in tragedy the misfortunate event is caused by an explicable error and not by the inevitable force of necessity: "La tragedia escénica trata de mostrar cómo los catástrofes

y desgracias son castigos—o consecuencias automáticas, si preferimos una calificación menos personal—de los errores o excesos de los hombres" ("La tragedia" 69). For this reason, Buero argues that tragedy has always been an expression of the triumph of "libertad" over "necesidad," even when this freedom leads to personal disaster: "Al comienzo de todo encadenamiento trágico de los catástrofes, los griegos ponen un acto de libertad humana y no un decreto del destino" (70). Buero also insists that tragedy serves to teach us about our human limitations, which is in keeping with Aristotle's view that the greatest pleasure of viewing tragedy comes from learning. This learning, according to Buero, leads the spectator to a position of hope. By representing on stage the "tragedies of life," Buero argues that "ampliamos su sentido ... invitando a que el espectador halle posible[s] soluciones para evitar que cosas así vuelvan a suceder ... De ahí la 'esperanza trágica', aún cuando sólo sea implícita" ("Conversación pública" 39). Buero's description of the learning that leads to hope prompted by tragedy is perfectly compatible with Lear's description of Aristotelian catharsis. Like Aristotle, Buero also attributes the positive value of tragedy, which he centers in his concept of tragic hope, to catharsis. For this reason, Buero claims that "[l]a catarsis no es ya descarga, sino mejora ... es lo mismo que interior perfeccionamiento" ("La tragedia" 67).

Given that the theory of tragedy that Buero follows when writing his own tragedies is compatible with Aristotle's *Poetics*, it is clear that tragedy such as the Greeks imagined is indeed possible today, albeit with minor formal changes that reflect the tastes of the modern audience, such as changes to the classic chorus and the absence of masks. In addition to upholding Aristotelian requirements for tragedy, Buero also places tragedy within the two extremes of "la negación absoluta" and "la fe sin sombra de duda," which,

according to Steiner and Sender, make tragedy impossible. Buero argues that tragic hope lies between these two extreme positions: "[D]el uno al otro no hay más que un trayecto en el que la esperanza trágica se da en mayor o menor grado, pero se da siempre" ("La tragedia" 76). As we saw, Buero's view of tragic hope is based on an Unamunian tragic sense of life, which, at once, shatters both faith in the Judeo-Christian God as well as in scientific progress. Unamuno argues that our modern age of reason is the most tragic because it is reason that destroys faith: "[E]s una verdadera enfermedad, y trágica, la que nos da el apetito de conocer por gusto del conocimiento mismo" (76). If reason tells us that we are mortal and that human existence lacks higher meaning, any technical or scientific progress is also meaningless: "Y acaso la enfermedad misma sea la condición esencial de lo que llamamos progreso, y el progreso mismo una enfermedad" (73). According to Unamuno, one type of anti-tragic faith described by Steiner, faith in progress, destroys the other and more important type of anti-tragic faith described by Steiner, faith in immortality. Unamuno's tragic sense of life, therefore, describes a view of human existence within which tragedy is indeed possible according to Steiner's more limited definition of tragedy. This is why Unamuno calls it tragic. Yet, as we saw, Unamuno's tragic sense of life does not reach the extreme doubt described by Buero as "la negación absoluta." Unamuno advocates maintaining the struggle between the heart, which wants to believe, and the head, which finds overwhelming reasons not to. From this struggle, "nace la santa, la dulce, la salvadora incertidumbre, nuestro supremo consuelo" (*Del sentimiento* 167). This uncertainty, which is tragic, "ha de fundar su esperanza" (156). As the previous chapters argued, this hope, which Buero and Unamuno find natural to tragedy, is what prevents tragedy from being an affirmation of

an absurd view of the world, that life is meaningless and all human struggles worthless. As we have seen, according to Buero, tragedy will never confirm this but rather, will always keep these questions open: "El absurdo del mundo tiene muy poco que ver con la tragedia como último contenido a deducir, aunque tenga mucho que ver con ella como apariencia a investigar" ("La tragedia" 71).

As we saw in the analyses of Unamuno and Buero's tragedies, these authors wrote tragedies that end badly. Nevertheless, these tragedies, according to their authors, still offer hope for the spectator by keeping these fundamental questions considered in tragedy open. In *La Esfinge*, Ángel is killed before he has resolved his fears that nothingness awaits him after death. Yet, the play closes with the hope that death will provide peace, in addition to its hopeful affirmation of the meaning human relationships adds to our existence found in the reconciliation of Ángel with his wife. *La venda*, likewise, closes with the symbolic death of God when María's blindfold is removed and her blind faith destroyed. The hope in this play, however, is founded in María's baby, the symbol of Christ, who, as we recall, Unamuno relates to Don Quijote for their shared struggle for belief in the absurd. Possibly Unamuno's best example of modern tragedy, *Fedra*, also closes in the misfortune of Fedra's suicide while still representing the hope of her redemption through the reconciliation of father and son. Buero's tragedies have equally somber endings. *En la ardiente oscuridad* ends with Ignacio's death and the school's abandonment of a more authentic existence. However, Carlos' conversion reveals Ignacio's triumph and with it, the hope that recognition of our limitations may yet lead to surpassing them. In a similar manner, *La tejedora de sueños* also ends in misfortune. Penélope's lover is dead and she and Ulises feel only hatred for one another. Yet,

Penélope's closing words of the play offer the hope of a world without wars founded in a human community based on compassion, understanding and forgiveness. As Iniesta Galvañ's arguments make clear, not every spectator will walk away from these tragedies with a sense of hope. It must be imagined, however, that these spectators would find hopelessness in Greek tragedies with unhappy endings as well. Iniesta Galvañ's response to Buero's tragedies reveal the inherent problem of a literary genre defined by something as subjective as the cathartic experience: the response will never be the same for every spectator, as is proved by the difference between Plato and Aristotle regarding this very genre. This study makes clear, however, that Unamuno and Buero see hope arising from these tragic conflicts.

This study has also shown that Unamuno and Buero's dramas follow the fundamental Aristotelian requirements for tragedy. In each drama studied, with the exception of *La venda*, the tragic hero moves from a state of fortune to misfortune, caused by an error committed by the hero. As we saw with *La venda*, the symbolic destruction of blind faith by reason is not the result of a human error, however, as we recall, the lack of an error in this play does not make it un-tragic *per se*; instead, it is simply less preferable to Aristotle and more along the lines of what he describes as "simply shocking." In the other four plays considered, it is worth mentioning that the human error can be attributed to egotism in every case. Ángel's lack of consideration of his wife and his peers, in addition to his sense of self-importance, leads his followers to kill him. Fedra's selfishness in her pursuit of Hipólito as well as in her desire to be perceived as a martyr lead her to commit suicide. Ignacio's provocation of Carlos and the brazenness with which he pursues Juana lead Carlos to murder him. And finally,

Penélope's obsession with being as beautiful as Helena encourage Ulises to mistrust her fidelity, which leads to the tragic downfall in this play. The predominance of self-centeredness at the core of these tragic heroes' faults reveals an intriguing aspect of Unamuno and Buero's tragic view of the world that deserves further study. For the purposes of this study, however, it is important to note that these character's self-centeredness not only satisfies a basic Aristotelian requirement for tragedy, it also makes these characters more human, easier for the spectator to relate to, and therefore to feel fear and pity for.

Finally, as the analyses of these tragedies have shown, while both authors provide us with examples of modern tragedies, Buero's tragedies are far more accessible and are generally superior to Unamuno's. Doménech argues that Unamuno is, "el más trágico de nuestros escritores contemporáneos" ("Buero Vallejo" 115). Nevertheless, Doménech recognizes that "Buero ha encontrado una forma dramática que Unamuno no llegó a encontrar" (117). Buero's superiority can be attributed to the far more accessible language used by his characters and his ability to create dramatic tension through the use of immersion effects and dramatic irony. In addition, Buero gives his characters a far greater complexity than Unamuno's enjoy, which makes them far more believable. As we recall, Unamuno's characters often represent a particular idea and the drama, therefore, the conflict between these ideas. While Buero's drama, on one level, often does the same, Buero is far more capable of creating a symbolic conflict of ideas through characters that experience conflicting motivations, emotions and thoughts, which make them far more human and easier to feel fear and pity for. Buero also expands the reach of Unamuno's tragic sense of life. While Unamuno obsesses over the struggle between faith

and doubt concerning specifically the issue of immortality, Buero's portrayal of this struggle extends to all human limitations that seem impossible to surpass. As a result, Buero's tragedies, which portray the struggle between hope and doubt, appeal to a much larger audience.

Doménech rightly observes the following about Unamuno's theater: "Quienes comparten ese sentimiento trágico, suelen gustar del teatro unamuniano ... Quienes son insensibles a esa cosmovisión trágica, reparan sólo en su forma teatral poco elaborada" ("Buero Vallejo" 115). Buero's characters struggle for hope to surpass a wide variety of human limitations: blindness, social inequality, the inability to find true human compassion and understanding, the seeming inevitability of war, in addition to the apparent meaningless of human existence and the finality of death. It is worth noting that one of Unamuno's best tragedies, *Fedra*, is one of the few where the tragic hero's conflict moves beyond the explicit anguish of questioning God's existence. Buero's superior talent for the dramatic arts, therefore, in part lies in his recognition that the conflict must appeal to a universal human struggle. The question of immortality, clearly, does not grip everyone as much as it does Unamuno, which leads to little sympathy from such spectators when he portrays this anguish to them. In contrast, Buero's use of symbolism allows for a message that can be applied to a variety of social and metaphysical issues, which explains his ability to emotionally involve such a wide variety of readers and spectators. Nevertheless, the importance of Unamuno in the development of a modern Spanish tragedy of hope cannot be underestimated. Unamuno, after learning Danish in order to better understand Kierkegaard and through his own exceptionally well-written prose, introduces this modern struggle to believe in the rationally absurd, often

described as Christian Existentialism, to the Spanish speaking world. As we saw, Doménech is not overstating the fact that "[e]l unamuniano "sentimiento trágico de la vida" late en todas las creaciones dramáticas de Buero, desde su primer estreno hasta los más recientes. No hablo de coincidencias externas... sino de una compartida visión trágica del mundo." ("Buero Vallejo" 116). Indeed, Unamuno describes a modern tragic conflict, which lies between the absolute optimism of faith and the absolute pessimism of extreme doubt, which denies the capacities of modern progress and of religious faith, yet still maintains a rebellious hope that refuses to abandon the most troubling and often unanswerable questions that concern the genre of tragedy. Buero simply enhances the meaning and accessibility of Unamuno's tragic sense of life by successfully transferring this sense to a viable modern theory of tragedy as well as to the themes of modern tragic drama.

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Vita

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